THE INVINCIBLE CRIME-BUSTER by Henry Gade

See Back Cover

AMAZING STORIES

JULY 20c

75¢

SURVIVORS from 9000 B.C.

By ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 7

AMAZING STORIES

JULY 1941

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JULY
1941

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NUMBER 7

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Front cover painting by Stockton Mulford, illustrating a scene from "Survivors From 9000 B. C."
Back cover by Frank R. Paul, depicting an imaginary City on Io
Illustrations by Julian S. Krupa; Magarian; Robert Fuqua; Jay Jackson; Joe Sewell
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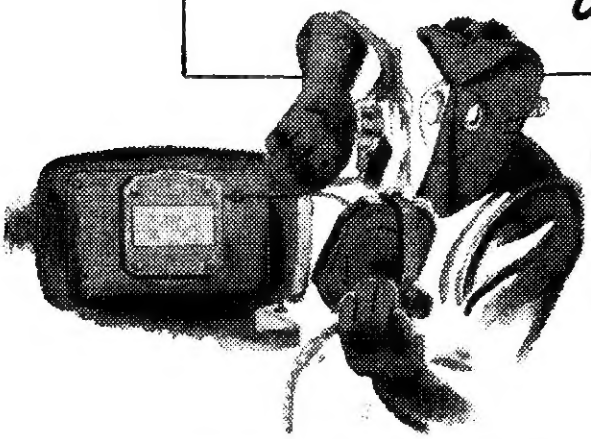
The Memory of an Atom



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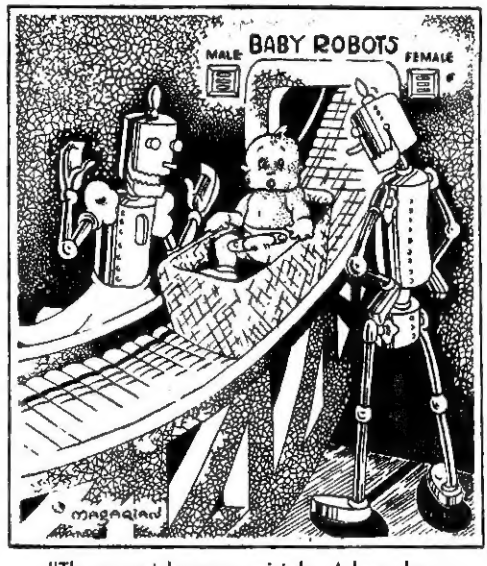
The OBSERVATORY by THE Editor

THIS month we bring back an artist who doesn't appear very often in AMAZING STORIES, but when he does, turns out a real job. He's Stockton Mulford, who painted the scene on the cover, illustrating Robert Moore Williams' fine story "Survivors From 9000 B.C."

This cover is an oil painting, and was the final result of a sketch submitted just as a sample idea. Robert Moore Williams saw the cover, and got the idea for the story from it. In our opinion, he has written a story that will thrill you clear through. It's in the old tradition of adventure that we've come to expect from all Atlantis stories of short-novel calibre. We'll certainly have more covers by Mr. Mulford in the future.

WE had scheduled Leigh Brackett, author of "No Man's Land In Space" in this issue for our Meet The Author section, but had to meet deadline with a rush substitution of Joseph J. Millard, who has done so very well with his sensational articles in "Scientific Mysteries." Then Leigh Brockett's auto-biography and photo came in so we substituted again.



"There must be some mistake, Adam, dear. You must have pushed the wrong button."

WHILE we are on the subject of Scientific Mysteries, a word about the man who illustrates them. Joe Sewell has been with us since the first issue edited by your humble servant, and he's remained consistently tops in his field. But recently, with Millard's team-up with him, he has been getting more fan-mail than any feature has ever received up to now. Obviously, you readers like his work!

JAMES NORMAN, who authors those jim-dandy tales of "Oscar" the detective of Mars in our companion magazine, *Fantastic Adventures*, and who made a hit in the June issue with his story of Angkor, returns this month with a corking good interplanetary yarn. Says Norman: "I saw the moving picture, Stanley & Livingston, and that silly phrase 'Mr. Livingston, I presume' kept ringing in my ears. There's some connection, of course, with my hero, Stan Leigh, and Stanley, and the missionary work of my 'lost explorer' but really, I wrote the darn thing just out of sheer protest, and danged if it didn't turn out to be a pretty fair yarn after all!" Which is no lie. We think you'll like "Mystery On Planetoid Ten."

YOUR editors have received so many letters from readers asking for time travel stories, that we've been tearing our hair out (both of them) and now, after some months, we've got a few for you. Williams' yarn is a time yarn, to some extent, and the yarns by McGivern and O'Brien are both very clever time stories in an unusual short length. It's hard to write a time yarn that hits, and these hit your editor. How about you? Do you get the same kick? And we hope you're satisfied!

ALREADY letters are crossing our desk with great regularity, commenting on our new artist, Magarian, who has brought his painstaking artwork to our pages. This artist seems to have met with your hearty approval, and he'll be with us from now on. If you're wondering about him, this is his first magazine work, and each illustration shows the effect of growing facility. We predict that he'll be one of your ranking favorites in a few months.

(Continued on page 68)

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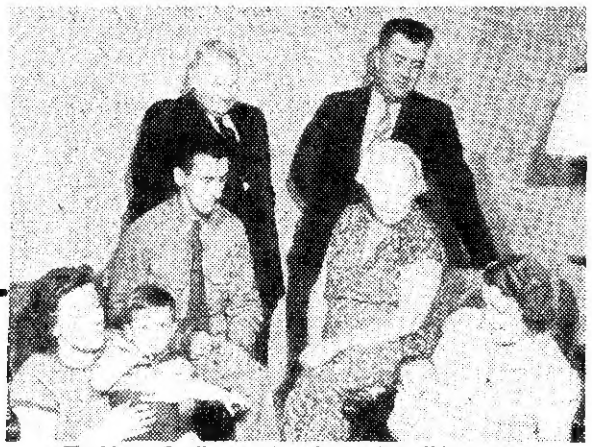

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Survivors

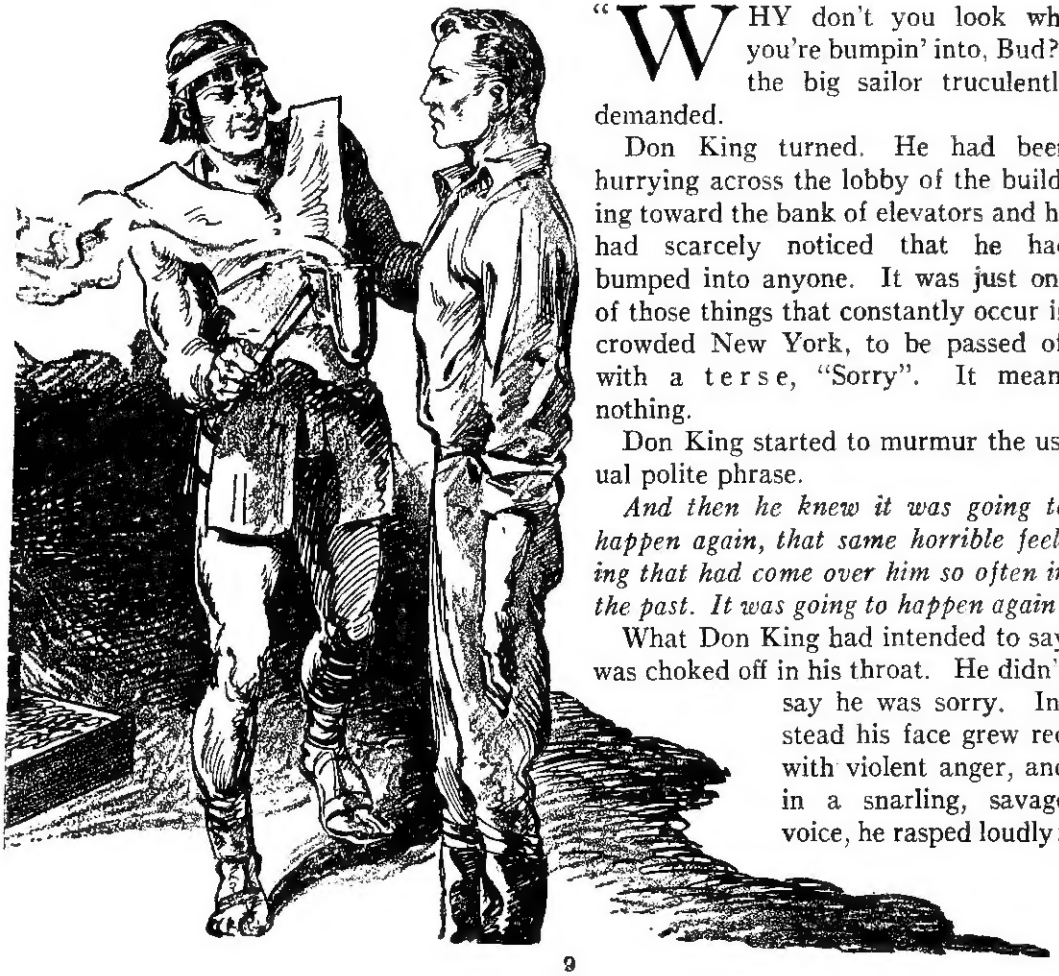
"Drink!" commanded Dor Diavo. "Let's see how you like the taste of hot lead."

from 9000 B.C.

by

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

Don King was the reincarnation of a man who lived 11,000 years ago—which wasn't so odd in itself, except that that man still lived!



"WHY don't you look who you're bumpin' into, Bud?" the big sailor truculently demanded.

Don King turned. He had been hurrying across the lobby of the building toward the bank of elevators and he had scarcely noticed that he had bumped into anyone. It was just one of those things that constantly occur in crowded New York, to be passed off with a terse, "Sorry". It meant nothing.

Don King started to murmur the usual polite phrase.

And then he knew it was going to happen again, that same horrible feeling that had come over him so often in the past. It was going to happen again!

What Don King had intended to say was choked off in his throat. He didn't say he was sorry. Instead his face grew red with violent anger, and in a snarling, savage voice, he rasped loudly:

"Down on your knees, you dog. Down, I say, before I have every bone in your body broken, before I have you beaten to a pulp and thrown from the cliffs into the sea. Down, you dirty dog, and beg for your worthless life. Down, I say!"

King was a husky chunk of a man, an inch under six feet, with the shoulders and hands of a prize fighter. Oddly, his youthful face was a mahogany brown, a trade-mark that could only have been left on him by the fierce tropical sun. In his gray eyes, fastened on the sailor, were two expressions, ruthless anger and terrible fear; two men seemed to look out of his eyes.

King was big. But the sailor was bigger. A good six foot three, and built in proportion, he towered over the smaller man. In a fair fight between the two, the wise money would have been on the sailor. Those long arms held a murderous strength, and the scar gouged down the left side of his face showed that he was no stranger to fighting.

He was big enough to tear King to pieces.

For an instant, he looked like he was going to do it. A terrible anger splashed itself over his face. He lifted his fists.

The two men had never seen each other before. They had bumped into each other as they hurried for the elevators. There was no justification for a fight. And yet, in the flash of an instant, over a trivial incident, they had squared off and were facing each other as if they intended to fly at each other's throat.

The lobby of the building was thronged. Startled passers-by hastily moved aside to gawk with incredulous eyes at the two men.

"Down," King hissed from between clenched teeth. "Down, you mangy cur, and beg for your worthless life!"

Muscles worked in the sailor's throat. A look of shocked surprise appeared on his face.

"Down!" King rasped.

A flowing tide of white was creeping over the sailor's face. There was a struggle going on within him. Fascinated, he stared at King, his features working. His hands clinched and unclinched.

An awed silence fell in the lobby.

"There's going to be a fight," somebody whispered.

"What's the matter with them?" a second person asked. "What are they mad about?"

"They bumped into each other," the explanation came.

"Bumped into each other! Gwan, they're not going to have a scrap over a little thing like that!"

"I saw it happen," the first person insisted. "That's all it was—they just bumped into each other."

"I don't give a darn if you did see it happen, there's more back of it than *that.*"

"Oh, golly, *look!*" somebody whispered excitedly.

The big sailor was groveling on the floor. Stretched full length in front of King, he was abjectly begging for his life.

"Master, Master," he was pleading. "Don't have poor Joe beaten. Joe didn't know what he was doing when he spoke to you like that, Joe didn't. Joe didn't mean anything. Please don't have poor Joe beaten, Master. He won't ever, ever, *ever* do it again. Please, Master, *please* . . ."

DON KING was looking down at him. His face was white with strain. He passed a hand in front of his eyes. Perspiration had appeared on his forehead. He pulled a handkerchief out of his coat pocket and wiped it away.

"Please, Master . . ." the big sailor begged.

A change had come over King. Only he knew how terrible a change it had been. The by-standers saw the terrible anger go out of his eyes, saw his whole body tremble as a convulsive shudder passed through it.

"Joe didn't mean anything," the sailor continued. "Joe didn't know what he was doing. Joe won't do it any more."

"You poor devil," King said, his voice vibrant with compassion. "So it's got you too, has it?"

"Please don't have poor Joe beaten," the sailor answered.

"There now," King said. "You're not going to be beaten. Stand up, man. No one is going to harm you." He reached down and took the sailor by the arm, lifting him to his feet.

An awed, incredulous fear showed on the sailor's face. He trembled and tried to draw away from King.

"Don't be afraid," King said. "I'm sorry I spoke to you the way I did, but I—couldn't help myself. What's your name?"

"Joe Markham, Master."

King shook his head. "Don't call me master," he said.

"No, Master," the sailor answered.

King started to say something but changed his mind. The gawking curious crowd caught his eye. He suddenly took the sailor by the arm and led him, still trembling, to the elevator.

"Eleventh floor," King said to the operator.

The cage shot upward. Out of the corner of his eyes, King watched the sailor. The man was shaking like a leaf. When they got out of the elevator the sailor followed him, walking like a frightened dog following its owner. King mopped the sweat from his face and opened a door marked:

Dr. Frederick Ponder
Psychiatrist

Dr. Ponder was one of the most celebrated psychoanalysts in the world. Formerly a resident of Vienna—until political strife had driven him from his beloved city—he had been a student under the immortal Freud and he had been one of that group of gifted Viennese men who have contributed so much to the beginning science of the mind.

Dr. Ponder was in conference and King took a seat in his reception room.

"Sit down, Joe," he said sighing. "We'll have to wait a few minutes."

The suggestion seemed to horrify the sailor. "You want poor Joe to sit down with the Master?" he questioned.

King stared at him. Joe remained standing. King shook his head. He said nothing more. But fifteen minutes later, when the receptionist ushered him into the office of the psychiatrist, he was almost babbling when he spoke.

"Dr. Ponder, it's happened again. And this time it's worse than ever before. Is there anything under the sun that you can do to help me?"

PONDER was a little man. The heavy spectacles that he wore, his short but neatly clipped beard, and his heavy head of snow-white hair, made him look like an elderly but benevolent gnome. He blinked at the man who had entered, and then, recognizing his caller, was out of his chair in a single bound.

"Don. Don, my boy. It is glad I am to see you. You have been gone—let me see, it is over a year this last time, is it not? And where was it that you went? I cannot seem to remember."

"Morocco," King answered. "But let me tell you what just happened."

Tersely he outlined the events that had taken place in the lobby. Ponder, his eyes blinking behind the thick spec-

tacles that he wore, sat back in his chair and listened, a thoughtful, intensely worried expression on his face.

"This man—this sailor—did you ever see him before?" he questioned.

"Never in my life," King answered. "When I bumped into him, I started to say I was sorry and keep moving. But something seemed to grab me. Suddenly I wasn't Don King any longer. I was somebody else. This sailor had offended me and I was terribly angry at him. It seemed to me that I had the power of life and death over him, that I could have him beaten, that I could have him killed. I was going to have him killed, if he didn't get down on his knees and beg for his life.

"I was on my way to see you at the time. But the strangest part, Doctor, was that the sailor seemed to recognize me. He called me master. He begged for his life. Doctor," King asked, horror and bewilderment in his voice. "Who am I? What on earth is the matter with me. Why should all these things happen to me?"

The psychoanalyst gazed thoughtfully at the man seated across the desk from him. He said nothing. Instead he went to a card file in a corner of the room and took a bulky manila folder from it. He began to rifle through the sheets of paper it contained.

"Six years ago," he said, "when you were twenty and just after you had finished college, your left arm went dead."

"It didn't go dead," King remonstrated. "I couldn't move it. But the oddest part was that I didn't seem to have an arm. And when it did move, it seemed to move of its own accord. I couldn't control it. It would suddenly jump up, the fingers would clench, and it would seem to try to hit somebody – somebody who wasn't present."

Ponder nodded. "The condition lasted four days and then went away as suddenly as it had appeared. That was the first sign of abnormality. The second—"

Sweating, Don King listened as the psychoanalyst went over all of the terrible things that had happened. How vividly King remembered them! Six years ago it had started, with his left arm going bad. After that—

It was just after he had finished college. He was home with his parents. One morning he had awakened to find himself miles from his home, clad only in pajamas, his feet cut and bleeding, with no knowledge of how he had got there. He had walked in his sleep. The police had brought the dazed youth home.

Next, one of his legs had gone dead. It had lost all feeling. Then it had seemed to develop a will of its own and had tried to walk away with him!

THEN the nightmares had come. Don King shuddered when he remembered them. They had been horrible. In them he had been an entirely different person. This person had inflicted terrible tortures on helpless slaves, he had had their eyes pierced with needles, molten lead poured in their ears.

Next had come the wanderlust, an uncontrollable urge to visit far-away countries. King had fought it, without success. One morning he had found himself signed on a tramp steamer bound for Central America. Odder still, he had jumped ship in Yucatan, and had spent a year exploring the Mayan ruins in that country. He was looking for something there, *but he did not know what he was looking for!* Something. He hadn't found it.

After that, the same uncontrollable urge had taken him to the Basque country in northern Spain. Again he did not know what he was looking for. He had

wandered through the mountains inhabited by that curious people of whose origin science knows nothing. He had learned the Basque language, in itself an extraordinary achievement, for the Basque tongue is different from all other known languages. But King had picked it up easily.

He had returned to America, and again the wanderlust had struck him. This time it had taken him to Egypt. He had wanted to see the Grand Pyramid of Gizeh, that strange construction erected in the land of Egypt before the dawn of trustworthy history. Seeing that pyramid, he was conscious only of extreme regret. Somehow it was different from what he had expected it to be. He had spent over a year in the land of the Pharoahs, wandering up and down the valley of the Nile, searching—for something.

From there, the mad wanderlust that controlled him had taken him to Morocco, back into the Atlas Mountains, over the sands of the Sahara. He did not know what he expected to find there. Whatever it was, he had not found it.

If he could only know what he was searching for! If he could only know why he had gone to Yucatan, to the Basque country, to Egypt, to Morocco!

If he could only know why he had snarled so savagely at the sailor! And why the sailor had dropped to the floor in front of him!

"Do I have a split personality, Doctor?" King asked. "Am I another Dr. Jekell and Mr. Hyde?"

The psychoanalyst shook his head.

"I think not, Don. No, there is more here than a split personality. It is, I think, one of the strangest cases in medical history."

"But is there any way to cure me? Is there anything I can do? Every time somebody bumps into me, I can't call them a mangy dog and order them to get down on their knees and beg for their life. Is there any way to get rid of this madness that obsesses me?"

Slowly Dr. Ponder shook his head.

"You are looking for something, Don. What it is neither you nor I nor anyone else knows. But when you find it, you will also find yourself."

"But what am I looking for?" King asked. "You've been treating me ever since my arm went dead six years ago. You have dug into my mind so deeply that you know more about me than I know about myself. Can you tell me what I am seeking?"

"I think I can," the psychoanalyst answered. "But you must remember that my answer is nothing more than a guess, with no scientific backing."

"What is it?" King asked eagerly.

"*Yourself,*" Ponder answered.

"Myself?" King echoed.

"Your *other* self," the doctor said.

HE got out of his chair and began to walk up and down the room, muttering strange oaths in his own language.

"I cannot be certain that I am right, Don," he said finally. "Ach, who knows what is true and what is untrue! The human mind, a great mystery it is. How does the mind work? Nobody knows definitely. Not even the great Freud could be sure. What is the mind? Again, there is no answer. But Don, the possibility there is—just a bare possibility it is—that you are the reincarnation of somebody else."

"Reincarnation!" King blurted out. "But that's impossible."

"Who knows what is impossible and what is not? Millions of people believe in reincarnation. It is just barely possible that you are the reincarnation of someone who lived a long time ago, some very savage, very cruel person. That would explain why you were go-

ing to have the sailor whipped."

"But this wanderlust," King protested. "How do you explain that?"

"I can't," the psychoanalyst answered. "I can't explain anything. All I can do is guess. But there is an explanation, somewhere. Never doubt that there is an explanation. You went to Yucatan, to Egypt, to Morocco, to the Basque country. Somewhere there is a thread that will give a complete explanation of why you went to these places, just as somewhere there is an explanation of everything that has happened to you."

He paused and looked at the man sitting in the chair in his office. There was a haunted, horror-stricken expression on King's face.

"Don, you must be very careful," he said. "For unless I miss my guess, this wanderlust will come to you again. Sooner or later it will take you to the place you are seeking. You will face great danger, Don, terrible danger. What this danger will be I cannot tell you. I do not know. But it is ahead of you."

There was pity in the doctor's voice. Pity and awe. Pity for the man whom he could not help. Awe, because he sensed that through this man there flowed the thread of a tremendous mystery.

Don King rose to his feet.

"Is this all you can tell me?" he asked.

Ponder gravely nodded.

"I wish it could be more, Don. But nobody knows. The science of the mind is too young. But be on the lookout. When this other person, of whom you are the reincarnation, seizes control of you, fight. You can conquer him, you can overcome him. But I doubt if you will be able to overcome the wanderlust. When it calls, you will have to answer. But beware of where it leads you, for, unless I miss my guess, it will lead you face to face with death itself."

"Thanks for the warning," said King huskily. "I'll try to be prepared."

HE walked out of the office. In the reception room, Joe Markham rose hastily to his feet.

"Will you return home now, Master?" the sailor said.

King was suddenly trembling. Home! Master! The wanderlust was coming over him again. Something, somewhere on the face of the earth, was pulling him. But this time it was telling him to go with this sailor, that Joe Markham was a guide who would take him to the unknown place he was seeking!

He saw, also, the submissive manner of the man. The sailor was actually cowering before him. King saw what it meant. If he was the reincarnation of some person dead for no telling how many centuries, then this sailor was also a reincarnation—*of his slave!* There could be no other meaning. The humble, cowering attitude of the man, was that of a slave!

The realization shocked King to the bottom of his soul.

He did not want a slave. Slavery belonged back in the hideous past of the race. But whether he wanted one or not, he had him.

"Joe—" King whispered. "You're not a slave. Do you understand? You're not a slave."

Doubt showed on the weather-beaten face.

"I do not understand, Master," the answer came.

King groaned.

"We'll settle this later, Joe," he said. "And now there is one question I want to ask you?"

"Yes, Master."

"Can you take me home?"

The sailor seemed to act like a man

in a trance. Doubt and uncertainty showed on his face.

"I—I think so, Master," he said hesitantly. "It is far away, but I seem to know how to go. We will need to take passage on a ship, Master, but I think I know what ship we will go on. Yes. I think I can take the master home."

"Good," said King grimly. Elation surged through his heart. At long last he was going to find out who he was. At last he was going to know what he had sought in the strange places of the earth!

But mindful of the doctor's warning, he went first to a sporting goods store and purchased guns.

CHAPTER II

Mystery in the Sea

"THERE'S something splashing in the sea astern of us," the man at the wheel nervously called out.

Don King and Joe Markham were sprawled on the amidship hatch, smoking a final cigarette before turning in for the night. They had taken passage on a small, English-owned sailing ship. The sailor, walking like a man in a trance, had taken Don King to this ship. King had been tremendously surprised to learn that sailing ships were still in use. But the sailor had been certain that this was the vessel he was seeking.

"This is the ship, Master," he had said. "It will take us near home."

The vessel, loaded with lumber, was bound for the Azores.

Now it had been for days caught in that great windless area that lies near the Azores. The night was moonless and dark and the ship was wallowing in a slick, silent sea. The sails hung lifelessly from the yardarms overhead. There was no wind. Not even the trace of a breeze stirred the rigging.

In that silent sea something was splashing.

King raised himself on one elbow and listened. He could hear the sound plainly. Something was raising a tremendous hubbub in the water. Sharp cracks, like huge fins beating the surface, came through the night.

"Do you suppose it is a school of porpoises?" he asked.

"I don't know, Boss," Joe Markham answered. "But I never heard porpoises make that much noise."

In the two weeks that had passed since they took passage on this vessel, King had succeeded in overcoming much of the sailor's abject fear of him.

Between the two men a warm friendship had sprung up. They had a common bond. Under King's questioning, Markham had admitted that he, too, had been afflicted just as King had been. He had suffered from the loss of the use of his arms and legs and the same resistless wanderlust that drove King had also driven Markham, with the result that he had turned to the sea. There was no doubt in either of their minds that they had at some remote time been master and slave. Nor did they doubt that their destiny — whatever it was — was somehow the same.

But was there a connection between the strange fate that ruled them and this sudden splashing in the sea astern of the ship?

They arose and walked to the stern of the vessel. The helmsman was peering into the darkness behind them.

"What do you think it is?" King inquired.

"Might be a killer whale," he answered. "Maybe a couple of killers in a fight."

"Did you ever hear whales make that much noise?"

"No—" the helmsman slowly answered. "I never did."

The splashing increased in volume.

"It's following us," the helmsman said nervously. "I've been hearing it for maybe half an hour. At first it was far away. But now it's coming a lot closer."

King and Markham leaned over the rail, trying to locate the source of the sound. Strain their eyes as they might, they could see nothing.

"I don't like it," Markham muttered. "Do you think it's got anything to do with—us?"

King shook his head. A subtle tension was beginning to creep over him. An eerie chill moved up and down his spine. In the darkness behind the ship the splashing grew louder. There was no longer any doubt but that something was following the ship. But what was it? King slipped his hand inside the leather jacket he was wearing, felt of the heavy automatic pistol snuggled in the shoulder holster. The feel of the gun was slightly reassuring.

BY now the watch was clustering along the rail, listening to the sullen splashing sounds. The crew of the ship was mostly made up of boys between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, serving an apprenticeship in sail under seasoned officers. Normally they were as talkative as magpies. But now they were silent.

The helmsman sent one of them below to awaken the captain. Somebody must have awakened the sleeping crew, for they came piling on deck and joined their comrades at the rail, nor did the captain send them below.

The threshing noises seemed to lessen.

"It's going away," someone muttered thankfully. The puzzled crew began to relax. Even though they were youngsters, all of them had already absorbed the superstitions of the sea. The heavy, sullen splashes coming closer and closer to the ship had roused their fears of the supernatural. Scratch the surface of any seaman and there will be found, if not a belief in, at least a terribly pathetic fear of, the monsters of the sea.

Had a sea monster been chasing them? King wondered.

"It's gone," one of the crew whispered. "It's gone away. What do you think it was?" he asked one of his comrades.

Before the lad had time to answer everyone on the ship knew that it hadn't gone away.

A cry came echoing across the water, a shrill sharp wail that set Don King's teeth on edge. Automatically his hand dived under his jacket for the pistol holstered there. Out of the corner of his eyes he saw Markham jerk nervously as the cry came.

The cry was shrill and blatant. It roared across the sea in two brazen notes. It died in a gulping murmur.

By no stretch of the imagination could that cry have come from any creature known to inhabit the ocean. The splashes might conceivably have been caused by a school of whales playing on the surface. But no whale could have uttered that cry.

"The sea demon!" the old helmsman gasped.

"Nonsense!" the captain said sharply. But there was no conviction in his voice.

The splashing sounds came again, louder now, closer.

Suddenly an apprentice yelled.

"Something black's coming toward us!"

King saw a dark object, like the conning tower of a submarine, slithering through the water toward them.

The captain, apparently thinking it was a submarine, roared,

"Sub ahoy!"

There was no answer.

"Sheer off!" the captain shouted. "You damned fools, you'll run us down. Show a light!" he bellowed at the crew.

Someone grabbed a lantern and swung it back and forth. The light only seemed to make the thing come faster. It was p l a i n l y visible now, splashing through the waves toward them. And there was no mistaking its intention—it was after the ship!

KING found himself with the pistol in his hand, nervously waiting—for what?

"Down with the helm!" the captain ordered, springing to the wheel to assist the helmsman.

The ship, deep in water, was sluggish. She had no engine. On top of that, there was no wind. The ship, lacking steerageway, refused to respond to the helm. They couldn't dodge the thing that was coming toward them, and with no wind, they certainly couldn't out run it.

"What do you think it is, Boss?" Markham gasped.

"We'll soon know, Joe," King answered.

Then the cry came again. Shrill and sharp it daggered through the night. This time there was a gloating, excited note in it—the same note that sounds in the bugling of the running hound hot on the scent of fleeing prey.

Even more incredible than the cry itself, was the fact that it seemed to form words.

"Kra—*kor!* Kra—*kor!*"

King gasped in blank bewilderment. The wailing cry that came through the night formed words! Rather, it formed a single word, twice repeated.

But more incredible than that was the fact that he understood the word! Vaguely, dimly, and yet unmistakably, he knew what that single word meant!

Then the black monstrosity out of the ocean night was on them.

King saw something black and snake-like come up over the stern of the ship. It tapered to a pointed end and he had the fleeting impression that a rope was being thrown aboard. Instantly he knew it was not a rope. It wrapped its snaky length around the man at the wheel, lifted him ten feet into the air, and while it jerked him overboard, *literally squeezed him into two pieces.* His scream of mad fright and madder pain choked off in a horrid gurgle.

Every man on board the ship saw death come to the helmsman. Like a frozen blanket, silence fell. It was broken only by the labored breathing of horribly frightened men and the splashing sounds coming from the monster in the sea.

The mad scream of an apprentice broke the silence. Instantly there was pandemonium on the ship as the crew fled forward.

"What'll we do now, Boss?" Joe Markham husked.

"Fight!" K i n g grimly answered. "You've got a gun. Use it."

He leaped to the rail. A black mass was m o v i n g through the water approaching the side of the ship. The pistol jerked in his hand as he pressed the trigger. He fired as f a s t as he could work the weapon. Beside him, Markham, leaning over the rail, was also firing.

A sullen clanging came from the monster. It seemed not to feel the heavy slugs smashing into it. Its pace did not slacken.

"We're not d o i n g any damage," Markham yelled.

"I was afraid of that!" King groaned. "Our pistols aren't heavy enough."

Forward he caught a glimpse of the crew. They were trying to lower a life-

boat, but in their panic they had so tangled the rigging that the boat could not be dropped.

He saw another of the ropes come shooting up out of the water. He knew what they were. They weren't ropes. They were *tentacles!*

The captain seized an ax. With it he slashed viciously at the tentacle. It was the brave act of a courageous man. It was also his last act. Two of the tentacles seized him. His screams retched through the air as the tentacles, one grasping him around the feet and the other around the body, pulled him to pieces.

King was sick. Before his eyes two good men had died in terrible agony.

"Look out, Boss!" he heard Joe Markham shriek.

SIMULTANEOUSLY he was knocked off his feet. As he hit the deck, he caught a glimpse of a tentacle waving in the air above him. It was reaching toward him, fingering in every direction. He rolled, and it followed him like a snake.

"Boss! Watch out!" Markham screamed.

King saw the tentacle diving toward him.

Simultaneously Markham fired at it. The slug smashed into the ropy length. About three feet of it suddenly went limp. Markham's bullet had damaged it. It hung uncertainly in the air for a second and then was jerked back overboard.

"Thanks, Joe," King gasped, getting to his feet. "You saved my life."

"We better get forward," the sailor answered, "before one of those tentacles tears us in two."

"That's good advice," King answered. He and the sailor started to run forward, but as they did so, the ship listed violently, throwing both of them to their knees. King's first thought was that a sudden squall had struck them, forcing the ship to heel over.

With wind to fill the sails they could outrun the monster ranging alongside. Wind! A squall!

Grabbing a rope, King pulled himself to his feet. The ship heeled over again, the whole heavily-laden vessel rocking as if it were caught in a gale. A splintering crash sounded. Then King saw why the ship was heeling over.

It wasn't because of a wind. The sea was still flat and greasy. No sudden squall had struck them. The monster had come alongside and was trying to climb aboard. Its weight was causing the ship to heel over so violently!

The vessel, though small in comparison with an ocean liner, was huge when compared to any creature known to inhabit the sea. Yet the thing climbing aboard weighed enough to make the whole ship list heavily.

Again the cry roared out.

"Kra—*kor*. Kra—*kor* . . ."

King got the impression that it waited for an answer.

And from far distance an answer came! A shrill, clean, note of a horn raced across the waters.

"Kra—*kor!*"

Again the horn note sounded. It was closer this time.

"There are two of them!" Joe Markham gasped. "They're calling to each other. Boss, what are we going to do now?"

"Go below," King answered. "If we stay up here one of those tentacles—"

The words were choked off in his throat. As he started down the companionway one of the tentacles struck him heavily. It was like the blow of a mighty fist. Stars splashed before King's eyes. The blow knocked him off balance. He fell down the companion-

way, struck with a sickening crash at the bottom. The stars flashing before his eyes dissolved into utter blackness.

He vaguely knew the fall had knocked him out. As consciousness faded, he dimly heard, rising above the crashing of the monster climbing aboard the vessel, the horn blowing in the distance.

CHAPTER III

The Unknown Island

KING awakened to find the frightened face of Joe Markham bending over him. His head was throbbing with a splitting ache and as he tried to get to his feet, his whole skull threatened to explode. He fell back.

He was lying in the bunk in his own cabin. Apparently the sailor had brought him there. Light was coming in through the portholes.

The ship was silent, as though at anchor. When under sail the vessel creaked and groaned. But now she was silent.

King, his mind reverting to the incredible creature that had attacked them, listened again for that weird cry that had come hurtling through the night. He did not hear it.

"What happened, Joe?" he whispered. "Where are we?"

"Boss," the sailor answered huskily. "We're *there.*"

"*There?* What do you mean?"

"We've found the place we've both been trying to find," Markham whispered, his scarred face tense with fear. "The place you looked for in Egypt, and Spain, and Central America, and didn't find. We're *there,* Boss."

An electric thrill shot through King. The unknown, hidden place that he sought—he had found it!

"Where is it? Where are we?" he demanded eagerly.

The sailor somberly shook his head. "It's an island. But where it is I don't know. The ship was towed to it, but I didn't dare go up on top to see where we were being taken. I looked through the portholes as we came in We were brought into a big hole in a cliff. Right now we're floating in a pool in some kind of an underground cavern."

An island, King thought. It must be somewhere near the Azores. The place toward which the wanderlust had driven him was out in the Atlantic Ocean! It wasn't in Spain, or Egypt, or Central America. It was an island in the sea.

"What happened after I got knocked out?" he questioned. "What about the monster that was attacking us?"

A superstitious tremor passed over the sailor's face.

"It wrapped its tentacles around the ship and held us. It didn't really try to come aboard. It just grabbed us and held on tight. And all the time it kept screaming and that horn kept answering it, coming closer and closer."

"Then what?" King questioned.

"Boss," the sailor answered huskily. "There was somebody or something in a boat. *It* talked to whatever was in the boat."

"What do you mean by *it?*"

Markham shivered.

"The monster. It talked to whoever was in the boat. It shrilled and whistled and screamed and somebody in the boat told it what to do. Anyhow it jerked all the sails off the ship. Then it tore down the masts. It snapped them into pieces, Boss, just like you or I would break a match in our fingers. Then it began to tow the ship.

"Boss, I tell you it took us through the water faster than any ship I was ever in before. All the time, the boat stayed with us, its horn squawking like

the devil himself. It brought us here to this cavern. We've been here maybe half an hour. The monster may still have hold of the ship, for all I know. I haven't gone outside to see."

KING lay still, trying to understand what Markham had told him. His head was beginning to clear. The ache was subsiding. His strength was slowly coming back.

"What happened to the crew?" he asked.

"They went overboard," Markham gloomily answered. "Some of them may be hiding in the hold. I don't know. But most of them went overboard. That thing scared them so badly they jumped in the sea. They're fish food by now."

King winced at the thought of the crew diving into the sea. Many of them couldn't swim at all and none of them could swim well enough to reach land.

"Somebody or something will get paid off for what happened to the crew," he said bitterly. He got to his feet, walked across the cabin and opened his bags. Methodically he reloaded his pistol and filled his pockets with cartridges.

"You do the same," he ordered Markham. "Sooner or later, we'll need these guns."

The sailor was looking through the porthole.

"I think it will be sooner, Boss," he said, turning to King. "There's a boat coming to see about us."

King leaped to the port. He was just in time to see a large barge vanish around the stern of the ship. The barge looked like the pictures he had seen of Roman and Greek galleys. It had neither sails nor engines. *It was propelled by oars!*

The barge grated against the side of the ship. There was a loud *thump* as of a gangplank being thrown aboard. A harsh voice rasped an order. Feet clumped on the deck overhead.

"Keep your gun out of sight," said King. "We're going up to meet our fate."

With King leading the way and Markham following right behind him, they climbed the steps to the deck.

Emerging, King caught a glimpse of a huge cavern. It was a tremendous thing, stretching dimly away into the distance farther than he could see. A series of round holes cut in the roof overhead shed a misty golden illumination over the scene. The ship was lying in a large pool. To one side was what looked like a deserted city. Connecting the pool in which the ship was lying and the city was a canal. There seemed to be many of the canals and the impression King got in a single hasty glance was that this place much resembled the city of Venice, except that it was underground.

King only had time for a hasty glance. He found himself face to face with a squad of soldiers.

They were not clad as were the soldiers of the United States army, in brown khaki. Nor did they wear tin hats and carry rifles. They were dressed in chain armor, helmeted like knights, and they carried round shields and long lances.

King stared at them in amazement. Their armor and their weapons belonged to a day that was hundreds—if not thousands—of years past!

They in turn gaped at him. But only for an instant. Then their leader recovered from his astonishment and rasped an order. King found himself facing a row of sharp lance points.

"Stand aside, Boss," he heard Markham whisper from behind him. "We'll mow these rats down. If they think that tin armor they're wearing will stop

a slug from a .45 they've got another think coming. Get out of the way, Boss, and we'll let 'em have it."

"No!" King hissed. "Keep your gun out of sight. Before we do any shooting, there 're lot of things we need to know."

The officer in charge of the squad hastily called back to the barge, apparently for further orders.

"Bring them before me," a voice said.

THE words were not in English but Don King understood them. At the moment, he was not greatly surprised to discover that he had understood. The language in which the command had been couched was very similar to Basque. There were differences but they were slight. He understood quite clearly. In the press of circumstances he did not remember that the Basque language is not definitely related to any known language on earth today, although efforts have been made to link it both with Sanskrit and the tongues spoken by various North American Indian tribes.

Don King was thinking: here is where I find out what is wrong with me. Here is where I find an explanation for the numbness that has occasionally struck my arms and legs. Here I will find the secret of my wanderlust. Only he knew how desperately important the solution of the mystery was to him. Certainly his sanity and very probably his life depended on his finding the solution. But he had not forgotten the warning of Dr. Ponder:

"Be very careful, Don. When you find what you see, you will also find great danger."

He was conscious of a surge of elation as the squad of soldiers formed a guard around them and marched them, King leading, down the gangplank and on to the barge.

Here, on this barge, he would find the solution to the mystery.

At the stern of the barge, under a canopy, was a wooden chair that evidently served as a throne. This was a king's barge then. Seated on the steps below the throne was a girl. She shot a startled glance at King as he approached. Her gaze came back to him and stayed there. There was shocked, bewildered fear on her face.

King scarcely saw the girl. As soon as he came before the throne, he stopped short.

Seated on the throne was a man. Wearing a barbaric headdress, a small double-bladed ax in his hands that was evidently his scepter, the man glanced down at the captives being brought before him. There was an indolent sneer on his face. And something of curiosity, but the sneer was more pronounced.

King was stricken speechless. He did not know exactly what he had expected to find on this barge, but he knew it was anything. *Anything but this.*

The man on the throne was King's exact double! The two men could not have resembled each other any more if they had been twin brothers. The strong jaw, the high forehead, the firm but delicate nose. Except for the sneer, they were exactly the same. The only difference was the sneer and the fact that King's face was tanned a mahogany brown in contrast to the face of the ruler, which was a pasty white.

"Down on your knees, you dog," the ruler rasped. "Don't you have any manner or are you attempting to defy Dor Diavo? Down on your knees—"

KING did not move. He couldn't have moved if he had wanted to. Surprise held him motionless. Now he

understood what the psychiatrist had meant when he had said, "You will meet yourself."

King was either meeting himself face to face or he was meeting a man who was his exact double.

The ruler stopped. He stared at King, for the first time noticing how much this prisoner resembled him.

The officer of the guard, interpreting his ruler's orders, stepped forward and struck King heavily on the shoulder, forcing him to the floor. Snarling, he leaped to his feet.

"Tell your men to keep their hands off of me—" he began. Then he saw the man on the throne was no longer looking at him. The ruler was looking at Joe Markham. The sneer on his face had turned to fear. He was cowering back on his throne.

"I had you beaten and thrown from the cliffs into the sea," he was whispering. "You're dead. You can't be alive. Like a clumsy fool, you stumbled into me. I had you killed. Go away . . ."

The ruler's face was gray with rising fear. He thought he was looking at a ghost, risen from the grave to haunt him.

King's mind was racing. He remembered how he and Joe Markham had bumped into each other, and he remembered the violent rage that had suddenly possessed him, the words that had leaped unbidden from his savagely snarling lips.

"Down on your knees, you dog, and beg for your worthless life. Down on your knees, I say, before I have every bone in your body broken, before I have you beaten to a pulp and thrown into the sea."

King, in the lobby of a building in New York City, had been repeating the words of the ruler of this incredible island here in the Atlantic Ocean. Here a slave had bumped into the ruler, into Dor Diavo. And Dor Diavo had snarled at him.

In New York City almost the same situation had existed. King's lips had repeated Dor Diavo's words. While that terrible spell had held him, he had snarled at Joe Markham just as Dor Diavo had snarled at his slave. Dor Diavo had had the slave killed. But now the reincarnation of that slave had come before him. Joe Markham was the reincarnation of the slave who had been beaten to death.

And Don King was the reincarnation of this ruler who sat on the throne here in this unknown Atlantic Island! Their resemblance to each other, King's strange wanderlust, his loss of control of parts of his body, everything pointed to one conclusion—that Don King was the reincarnation of Dor Diavo.

One question was thundering in King's mind. How could he be the reincarnation of a man who was still alive? Dor Diavo was very much alive. King was alive. What mad mystery was hidden behind this incredible fact?

"Where did you come from?" the ruler quavered, looking at Markham.

THE sailor was too stunned to answer. Hate was digging grooves in his face. His eyes had narrowed. His great hands were balled into fists. He had dropped into a crouch, and poised on his toes, looked like he was ready to leap at the ruler. All his actions showed that at first sight he instinctively hated the man who sat on the throne above him, the man who had ordered him beaten and thrown into the sea in a previous incarnation.

"Hold it, Joe," King hissed, speaking in English. "Don't jump him. You'll only get yourself killed."

The sailor looked at King. A little of the hate disappeared from his face.

He looked hopelessly bewildered. But he dropped his arms.

"If it please Your Majesty," the officer of the squad of soldiers answered. "They were both on this strange ship which we captured last night. But we do not know where they came from. When we discovered them, we brought them immediately into your presence, knowing that your great wisdom would enable you to deal with them."

The ruler regained a little of his shattered composure.

"Where did you come from?" he again demanded.

"From America," Don King answered.

"America? I never heard of the place. Is it, perchance, one of the lands beyond the Middle Sea?"

It was King's turn to gasp. "It lies to the west," he tried to explain. "It is composed of two great continents, North and South America, which stretch from pole to pole."

"*Mayan!*" Dor Diavo gasped. "You came from Mayan? Tell me: What happened to our colonies there? Many times I have wanted to know."

"Colonies?" King echoed. "I don't know what you mean. Great Britain, the Netherlands, and France have small colonies in the Americas, but they amount to very little. The two great continents are inhabited by free and independent peoples."

His reply seemed to astonish the ruler. But Dor Diavo did not question him further. Instead he abruptly changed the subject.

"How does it happen," he queried, "that you so much resemble me, man from America?"

"Although I don't understand it myself," King answered steadily, "I think the only possible explanation is that I am a reincarnation of you."

The words came easily to his lips, but the instant they were uttered he sensed that he had said the wrong thing. Dor Diavo's face seemed to freeze. A malevolent gleam leaped into his eyes. Silence fell.

In that sudden stillness King could hear the harsh breathing of their guards. He saw the face of the officer. There was startled fright in it. And the girl, who during this talk had remained seated below the throne looking wonderingly at King, suddenly rose to her feet. For an instant she stared at King, inexplicable hope gleaming in her eyes. Tremulously she smiled at him.

"He who comes again," she whispered.

The smile was wiped off her face in a second when Dor Diavo rasped in angry tones.

"Seize them! Bind, gag, and blindfold them."

King's hand dived for his gun. Before these devils threw him into some stinking prison hole, they would find they had a fight on their hands. His fingers closed around the butt of the pistol. Simultaneously one of the guards struck him on the head with the flat side of a lance. A ball of light exploded before his eyes. He felt himself falling.

Grimly he fought back to his feet, all the time trying to draw the gun. Before he could get it drawn a wave of bodies bore him to the floor. He fought like a tiger, but in spite of all he could do, he found his arms pinioned behind him. Loops of cord slid over his wrists. A fold of cloth was thrust into his mouth, another clapped over his eyes.

"Imprison them," he heard Dor Diavo order.

"Golly, Boss," Joe Markham choked through his own gag. "What did we do wrong?"

CHAPTER IV

In Prison

"THIS is the explanation," the pale girl said. She had come to them secretly in the night, slipping past the guards who kept constant watch in the corridor outside. "You are unquestionably the reincarnation of Dor Diavo. You have grown up in different countries, under different conditions, so that you think differently, but essentially you are the same man. We know that this sometimes happens. Our wise men have kept records for thousands of years, and have discovered many instances of a man being born again.

"It has happened to you. You not only look like Dor Diavo. You *are* Dor Diavo, who has come again to life. That is why you are in great danger. You look too much like the ruler. You might kill him, and take his place, and no one would ever know the difference. You might declare he is an usurper, and urge the people to rise against him. Many would follow you, for Dor Diavo has not been a gentle ruler."

"You don't have to evade the issue," King interrupted. "What is he going to do to me?"

"I—" the girl faltered.

"Out with it," said King.

"I don't want to tell you."

"I can stand it," the American answered. "I understand that I am a menace to the ruler. What is he going to do about it?"

"He will have you—killed!" the pale girl replied.

King said nothing. His mouth set in a grim harsh line.

"It seems I am two men," he finally answered. "So one of us must die. I can understand that. But what I can't understand is how I am the reincarnation of a living man. It is a question of heredity. What reincarnation means is that a person alive today is a throwback to some remote ancestor who lived thousands of years ago. Separation in time is involved. But Dor Diavo and I are alive at the same time. He cannot possibly be one of my ancestors, nor is it likely that we have a common ancestor. We are about the same age and were born about the same time—"

"But you aren't the same age," the girl protested. "Don't you understand? I thought everything had been explained. Dor Diavo and you were not born at about the same time. He was born at least fourteen thousand years before you were!"

"What?" the word leaped from King's lips. "But that's impossible!" he blazed. "You're talking nonsense!"

The girl faced him.

"Don't you understand?" she pleaded. "Dor Diavo—myself—all of us, this whole group belongs to the past. We belong to a period that your world has probably forgotten. *We were transported in time.* Dor Diavo did it. When he saw the catastrophe that was threatening us, he knew the only way to escape was to move forward in time. He and the wise men brought us out of the past."

KING sat down heavily on the stone bench that was all the furniture in the cell. His mind reeled under the meaning of what the girl had just told him. Dor Diavo and his people, possibly this strange island in the Atlantic, had been transported in time.

In a flash he saw that this explained how he could be the reincarnation of the ruler. Time travel. Two men born fourteen thousands years apart, one the reincarnation of the other, had met face to face because one of them had traveled in time.

It was also the explanation for the

strange garb of the soldiers, for the armour they wore and the weapons they used, for the ruler's barge driven by oars.

"Where—what country—what time—did you come from?" he faltered.

"From Atlantis!" the girl answered. "We are the remnant of the Atlantans who escaped the catastrophe which overwhelmed our island thousands of years ago."

Atlantis! The word was a bell ringing in King's mind. Atlantis, the lost land of legend that Plato had said once existed beyond the Pillars of Hercules. Atlantis, where civilization had first flowered in the long gone past of earth's hidden history. Persistent theories had credited the Atlantans with establishing colonies in Egypt and in Central America, colonies that had eventually almost forgotten the source from which they sprang after the motherland was destroyed.

And Dor Diavo had eagerly inquired, "What of our colonies in Mayan?" The ruler knew that those colonies had once existed and he had wondered what had happened to them.

"Then that explains my wanderlust," King whispered. "Dor Diavo wondered what had happened to the colonies of Atlantis. He wanted to revisit them, but for some reason he didn't. His impulse to visit them was transmitted to me in the form of a strange urge to visit these lands.

"That's what I was looking for in Central America and in Egypt! The lost colonies of my people. Probably the Basques were another colony, which explains why I picked up their language so easily. And there must have been another colony in what is now the Sahara Desert. That's what I am—an Atlantan! I was born in America but some of my ancestors, thousands of years ago, must have come from Atlantis!"

He had risen to his feet and was pacing the floor. The whole incredible picture was clear at last. Now he knew who he was, now he knew the maddening secret of his own identity. He was the far-removed descendant of some Atlantan. Somewhere in the dead past of Atlantis he and Dor Diavo had had a common ancestor.

"How long has it been since you came out of time?" he questioned.

"Six years," the girl replied.

Even the time checked. The date when King had first lost control of his arm checked with Dor Diavo's first appearance in the present.

"Tell me about the people here on this island," King said. "How many are there? Tell me about Atlantis."

"Not counting slaves, there are about six hundred of us, which was all Dor Diavo chose to bring through time. The others he left to perish in the catastrophe that was to follow. But how can I tell you about Atlantis? Surely the whole world knows the glories of Atlantis!"

"I'm afraid the world has forgotten," King answered.

UNDER his questioning, she retold the story of that land where civilization had first come to flower. It had begun so far back in the past that even she, who had come across twelve thousand years of time, could not tell when it started.

The girl talked hurriedly, in a voice little above a whisper, occasionally darting nervous glances back over her shoulder at the door. King had been so fascinated by the story she was telling that he had completely forgotten the danger that surrounded them. Her glances reminded him of it.

It was then that he began to wonder how she had evaded the guards posted

at the end of the corridor outside the prison cell. The guards had not brought her to the doorway. She had opened the door herself, cautiously lifting the heavy bar and slipping quickly through.

Had she bribed the keepers? he wondered.

Why had she come in the first place? He hadn't asked her that. All he knew about her was that she had been seated on the steps below Dor Diavo's throne on the barge. He had scarcely noticed her there, except that she had smiled at him.

Who was she? Where did she fit into the picture? And most of all why should he be so drawn to her?

"I am Sonthia," she said, when he questioned her. "And I came to you for help, Don King."

King smiled wryly.

"You came to a poor place. Joe and I need help ourselves."

"You said a mouthful there, Boss," Markham said, speaking for the first time.

"We will help each other," the girl spoke quickly.

"What can I do?" King asked.

"You can be our ruler, Don King. Plans have already been made. Dor Diavo is in his chambers, sleeping. He will awaken to find himself a captive. You will take his place. You look exactly like him. No one will ever question that the reincarnation of Dor Diavo rules instead of him."

King was taken aback. "But—"

"You need have no fears, Don King," Sonthia said. "Through our crafts, we knew that you existed in this new time. We knew eventually you would come here. A few of us, who have reason to hate Dor Diavo, prepared everything for the day when you would come. And he played neatly into our hands. He had you brought here to this secret cell. No one has seen you, other than the squad of guards. No one will ever know that you have taken Dor Diavo's place. We will have a new ruler—"

King stared at her. Was she telling the truth? Or was this some trap? After all, what did he know about her? Perhaps she was trying to trick him.

"Don't you understand, Don King?" she burst out. "I hate Dor Diavo. He brought me here to this time with him, because he wanted me for his plaything. But my parents, my brothers and sisters, my friends, he left back in the old time, to perish in the terrible catastrophe that he knew was coming. Everyone that I loved, he killed. Me, he kept alive. That is why I hate him, Don King. That is why you must help not only me but all of us.

"Dor Diavo is cruel and ruthless. All whom he brought to this new time he holds as slaves. We are not strong enough to overthrow him by force. He is too powerful and too cunning for us. If we revolted, he would have us beaten and thrown from the cliffs into the sea. You are our only hope, Don King. By craft, we can overcome Dor Diavo's power. We can substitute you for him and be free again."

BREATHLESSLY she stood before the American. New life seemed to sweep through her as the words poured from her lips. New life and new hope. Color came to her cheeks and fire leaped from her eyes.

"So the wind blows from that direction, eh?" said a heavy voice from the doorway.

King whirled. The door had opened noiselessly. Standing in it, flanked by his guards, stood Dor Diavo.

Sonthia had said the ruler was asleep in his chambers. But Dor Diavo wasn't asleep. He was here.

"I have long suspected there was a plot against me," the ruler continued.

"And I was quite sure the plotters would jump at the opportunity to substitute you for me. That's why I had you brought here to this cell and imprisoned, man from Mayan — to lure these would-be rebels out into the open. Otherwise I would have had you killed as soon as you were brought before me."

The ruler laughed.

"I tricked these would-be rebels very neatly. And you also, man from Mayan."

King heard a little cry of fear from the girl. The appearance of the ruler and her cry of fear convinced him that she had not been trying to trick him. She was a rebel all right, but she was fighting against a cruel and ruthless ruler.

"Seize them," Dor Diavo grated.

Their guns, and every other piece of metal in their clothes had been removed before they were put in the cell. The guards had obviously not known what the guns were for, but equally obviously they weren't taking any chances. The only weapons Don King and Joe Markham had were their fists. Fists against shields and short swords and lances. Fists against men in armor. Fists against battle axes.

"Grab that stone bench, Joe," King shouted. "We'll use it as a battering ram and drive straight through them. Sonthia! Get between us. We're not licked yet!"

As he leaped back toward the wall to help Markham lift the heavy stone bench, he looked over his shoulder to make certain the girl had understood what he was going to try to do.

He stopped in mid-stride, his eyes racing over the small room.

Sonthia was gone.

Seconds earlier she had been there in the room. He had heard her gasp in fear.

But now she was gone. Gone!

Two guards were pressing forward through the only door, swords ready, shields extended. They completely blocked the exit. She could not have slipped between them.

But she was no longer in the room. In the snap of a finger, she had miraculously vanished.

"Golly, Boss," Markham dumfoundedly gasped. "What happened to the girl?"

CHAPTER V

Into Invisibility

STARING at the empty room, Don King stood without moving. He had the bewildering impression that this was only another nightmare from which he would presently awaken. People didn't just vanish, in the snap of a finger, into nothingness. Girls didn't just disappear.

The wild thought was in his mind—perhaps none of this was real. These people had come out of ancient Atlantis, across a maddening gulf of time. Perhaps they existed here in 1940 as illusions, as shadows that had only the seeming of reality, as specters that moved ghost-like through a world in which they had no real existence. Perhaps Sonthia and Dor Diavo and this island kingdom had come out of his own mind. Perhaps he was really a descendant of some long dead Atlantan and he was re-living the experiences of his forebear.

"Sonthia!" he called sharply.

There was no answer.

"Sonthia!" This time his voice was almost a scream.

No answer came.

She was gone. Like a puff of smoke before the wind, she had vanished into nothingness. Except for Don King and

Joe Markham, and the guards pressing through the doorway, the prison cell was empty. Dor Diavo had stepped back into the corridor out of sight and had left his guards to do the dirty work.

"Spit them on your swords!" King heard the ruler order.

There was no time left to wonder what had happened to the girl, to wonder whether this was illusion or reality. The guards were real. King was willing to bet his life on that. It shocked him to realize he *was* betting his life on it.

"Up with the bench, Joe," he yelled.

The sailor was already tugging at the heavy stone seat. As King leaped to help him, he turned up a panic-stricken face.

"It won't come loose, Boss," he whispered. "It's set solid in the floor. It won't come out."

Markham's massive muscles stood out like ropes as he tried to lift the bench. Tried, and failed.

"Look out, Boss," he yelled, looking over King's shoulder.

King whirled. Two of the guards were already in the room. Others were coming through the door.

A sword, held in a brawny arm, was already raised. There was a gloating look on the sadistic face of the man who wielded it.

One stroke with that sharp-edged weapon and King would be cut in two. He would never really know what hit him. He would fall like a sodden lump of flesh, and the angel of death would swoop down for him before he touched the floor.

Glittering, the sword started down toward him. His only chance was to leap in under the blow, drive his fist into the face of the man with the weapon. It was a forlorn hope. He would run directly into the shield. And in the exact center of the shield was a needle-pointed metal spike six inches long, placed there for such an emergency as this. Anyone attempting to leap in under the descending sword would be automatically spitted on the spiked shield.

King started to leap. As he moved there was a sudden thump. A red bruise miraculously appeared on the face of the guard. The man staggered. Something in the air seemed to grasp the sword, jerk it out of the guard's hands. It leaped, hilt foremost, straight at King.

The startled guard gazed dumfoundedly at his empty hands. His eyes were wide with sudden fright. One hand automatically went up to the bruise on his cheek. He fingered it uncertainly.

"Here!" a voice hissed at King. "Take the sword. With it we may be able to fight our way out of here."

The voice was speaking from the empty air.

It was Sonthia's voice.

HE couldn't see her. There was a wavering blur in the air but it was so indistinct that he couldn't focus his eyes on it. Looking like the distortion produced by air currents rising above a hot stove, it flowed in and out of his vision so fast he could not be certain he really saw anything, except the sword. There was no doubt that he saw that. The hilt kept jabbing at his hands.

The second guard, perplexed, stared at the sword.

"Take it, Don King," came Sonthia's urgent whisper from nothingness.

"Quickly. It is our only chance."

Don King took the sword. Instantly a bruised place appeared on the face of the second guard. His sword was knocked from his hands. It fell to the floor. Before it more than had time to

come to rest, it leaped, hilt foremost, to Joe Markham.

"This one is for you, Sailor," the voice said. "Now I will get one for myself."

The indistinct blur leaped toward the other guards. There was a clatter and the men seemed to struggle for a minute among themselves. Then a sword detached itself from them, and apparently supported by nothing but air, menaced them from the front.

"At them, Don King!" said Sonthia's voice. "At them, Sailor. Never say die until we're dead."

King still did not realize what had happened. A hoarse shout from one of the guards brought him to his senses.

"The girl!" the guard shouted. "She has a cloak of the Invisible Ones."

There was terror in that shout, far more terror than could be accounted for by the fact that Sonthia, incredible as it was, had become invisible.

"The Invisible Ones!" a white faced guard echoed.

The words threw the men into consternation. A sudden chill seemed to strike them. Their sword points dropped.

King saw the change come over them, but he had no time to wonder about it. The important thing was that at last he understood what had happened to Sonthia. She hadn't vanished into nothingness. She hadn't been snatched back into the old time out of which she and her race had come. She had become invisible, which meant, among other things, that there was hidden somewhere in this Atlantan civilization a marvelous scientific knowledge. The scientists of 1940 did not know how to create invisibility. They were working on it and they would solve it eventually. But they hadn't solved it yet.

More important still, it meant that Sonthia was real. She was no illusion of his own mind, no phantom, no specter. She was real. And this land of Atlantis was real.

Silence fell. The guards looked uneasily and questioningly at each other.

In the corridor outside, Dor Diavo, staying safely out of danger himself, shouted.

"There are no Invisible Ones. Capture them, you mangy dogs. I'll have the head of the first man who refuses to obey orders."

The guards hesitated. They looked nervously at the sword waving in the air in front of them. They were afraid of that sword, they were afraid of the invisible girl who wielded it, they were afraid of the idea of invisibility. But they were more afraid of Dor Diavo.

King got the idea that the Invisible Ones were mythical creatures that the guards, for some reason, feared. Apparently there was a legend among the Atlantans of strange invisible creatures. When an invisible girl had jerked their swords from their hands, they had remembered the legend. They hadn't believed the legend until they saw the sword in the air, just as a man of the Twentieth Century, hearing stories about ghosts, doesn't believe in ghosts —until he sees one. Then he remembers the stories he has heard.

WHETHER or not the guards believed in their Invisible Ones, they had no choice but to believe in Dor Diavo. They *knew* him. They knew what he would do to them if they disobeyed his orders.

"I said to attack them," the ruler grated. "Spit them on your swords. A reward to the first man who draws blood. Death to the first man who tries to flee. At them, you curs, or I'll have your heads."

"*That* put the old convincer on

them," Joe Markham grated. "Here they come, Boss. I never handled one of these pig-stickers before, but here, I guess, is where—I—learn. Ugh!" The sailor grunted. He took one step forward, the sword clasped in both hands. He lifted it over his head and brought it down with all his tremendous strength.

A frantic guard tried to parry the blow. The descending blade knocked his weapon out of his hand. He tried to lift his shield. He never got it up.

The sailor's descending sword bit through the guard's metal helmet. It sliced his head neatly in two.

"Who's next?" Markham grunted, jerking the weapon free. He scorned to pick up the shield of the fallen man. It would only be in his way. He would have to use one hand on the shield and the other on the sword. To hell with that. Joe Markham wanted to use both hands on his pig-sticker.

Don King was already in action. There were eight of the guards. Sonthia had taken the weapons from three of them. Markham had just put one out of this and every other battle to come. That left four. The odds were two to one against them, not counting Sonthia. And God alone knew how many more guards there were with Dor Diavo in the corridor outside.

King parried a sword thrust that would have slit his throat from ear to ear. The guard was using the point, thrusting straight out from the protection of his shield. King ducked and swerved to one side, letting the sword go on over his shoulder. He struck fiercely upward. The arm of the guard was protected by closely-linked chain mail, which was all that saved his sword-arm. King's sword bit through the mail and into the muscles. Blood gushed. The guard dropped his sword. He wasn't badly wounded but he was out of the fight.

Three left to go! The odds were lessening.

"Give 'em hell, Boss!" Markham was roaring.

King swung his sword at the nearest guard. The fellow's shield came up and the blade glanced harmlessly from it. He lifted his own weapon for the fierce downward stroke. Another sword flashed through the air, knocking the blade from his hands.

It was Sonthia, fighting beside them, who had struck the sword from the hands of the guard. Sonthia, invisible.

"Good girl!" King called.

Two left to go. The odds were in their favor for the first time.

The odds shifted again, this time entirely in their favor. The guards had not liked this fight. The invisible girl who wielded a sword had almost driven them into a panic. Only the fear of Dor Diavo had kept them from running. Panic caught the two who had been disarmed. Without weapons, they could not hope to fight. They turned and ran. The two who still had their weapons fled with them.

"Come back and fight," Joe Markham yelled, as the guards all tried to get through the door at the same time.

MARKHAM and King they would have been willing to fight. But there was something about the idea of fighting an invisible girl that turned them into cowards.

"We've whipped them!" Sonthia's voice panted from the air.

Dor Diavo's shout sounded from the corridor outside.

"Get back in there and fight!" he screamed.

His men did not obey him. They scrambled through the door.

"Reserves!" the ruler shouted. "Forward."

The tramp of marching feet sounded in the corridor. More guards, coming at the double quick.

"Boss," said Markham nervously. "We better get to hell out of here while we have a chance."

King was thinking the same thing. They might overcome a few of Dor Diavo's men but in the end force of numbers would overcome them. And reinforcements were approaching at the double quick. He grabbed a discarded shield from the floor, fiercely gripped his sword, and started for the door.

"Wait!" Sonthia whispered.

"Come on," King answered. "If we don't make a break for it now, we'll never get another chance. We whipped and scared those guards off once, but we can't do it twice."

"But we will meet them outside," the girl's voice protested. "We have only one chance," she went quickly on. "Throw down your swords and shields."

The sword that she carried, which had been hanging in the air as she held it, fell with a clatter in the corner of the room as she tossed it down.

"But we'll be helpless," King kicked.

"No we won't," Sonthia answered. "I'm going to try to extend the cloak of the Invisible Ones to cover you two. I'm not certain it will work but I am going to try. Quickly!" Her voice was growing desperate with urgency as the pounding of racing feet grew louder outside. "It is difficult to make metal invisible. That is why you must discard your weapons. Hurry! They'll be here in a second. We must be out of the room before they block the door."

She was going to try to make them invisible! If the guards could not see them, they would have a chance to slip through the corridor without being seen. King saw the thin blur of light that was all he could see of Sonthia move toward him, felt her hand nestle into his. He flung the sword and the shield aside. Markham did the same.

King didn't know what Sonthia did. He expected a cloak of some kind to be thrown over him. But the girl did not do that. Her hand gripped his. He heard a thin, far-off vibration. The next second he was gasping for breath.

He was completely lost in blackness. If he had suddenly stepped into a completely dark room, the sensation would have been the same. He couldn't see.

"You will think you have gone blind," Sonthia's whisper reassured him. "Later, I will explain how I can see while you cannot. Now, hold tightly to my hand. I will lead you and the sailor out. Walk on tip-toes. Do not make any noise. Do not talk."

KING felt her pulling him. He followed blindly. His shoulder brushed against the door as they left the room.

"The guards are here," Sonthia's faint whisper came. "We must slip along the wall."

King didn't need to be told that the guards had arrived. He could hear their hoarse voices, the jangle of their equipment. Mostly he could hear the voice of Dor Diavo ordering them to enter the cell. King held his breath, and slid along the wall.

At any second a guard might touch them. An unwary sound might betray them. Sweat ran down King's face. He could not wipe it away. Blindly he slipped along the wall. He heard Markham's husky breathing, whispered fiercely at the sailor to be quiet.

He did not know how far away they were from the cell where they had been held prisoner. Suddenly silence fell behind them. A guard shouted.

"They're not in here."

Instantly Dor Diavo shouted. "The

girl has made them invisible. Lock hands and search the cell. Then search the corridor. *Feel* for them. Even if they are invisible, you can feel them. Get moving," the ruler ranted. "If you let them escape, I'll have you beaten to death."

"We'll have to run for it," Sonthia whispered.

CHAPTER VI

An Irresistible Command

"THIS," Sonthia whispered, "is why I could see while you could not."

She showed them a small device that looked like a pair of dark glasses. "With these, the wearer of the cloak of the Invisible Ones, can see. Unfortunately, I had only a pair for myself."

At least temporarily they had escaped from Dor Diavo and his men. By the time the guards had finished searching the cell and had started feeling their way along the corridor, they were safely out. Sonthia had led them, by devious trails, across the city. She had brought them to a plain, unornamented building standing by itself.

"Show me that cloak of invisibility," said King.

Sonthia was no longer invisible and he was looking keenly at her, trying to see the miraculous garment he knew she possessed. She was clothed in an abbreviated dress. A belt, caught in front with a buckle, circled her slim waist. A single small ornament glittered in the dark coils of her hair. Nowhere could King see anything that resembled a cloak.

"It is only called a cloak," she answered. "It really isn't." She pointed to the buckle on her belt and to the ornament in her hair. "These," she said, "are the cloak of invisibility."

King's doubt showed on his face. Markham, pressing nearer, grunted.

"You do not believe me," she challenged. "Well, see for yourself."

Her hand touched the buckle, pressed lightly against a design worked into the surface. A note, like the sound produced by a tiny harp, throbbed through the air. If King had not been listening very closely he would not have heard it.

Before his eyes Sonthia seemed to blur. She smiled at him. Then, in the snap of a finger, she was gone.

"Golly!" Markham husked. "She wasn't fooling us. But how on earth does that belt buckle make her invisible?"

"We'll have to ask her," King answered.

When the girl reappeared, they questioned her.

"I do not know how it works," she answered. "The invisible cloak is made in many ways. Almost always it resembles an ornament that anyone might wear without attracting attention. It might be a finger ring, or a necklace, or a bracelet. In my case, it is two ornaments. One will not work without the other. So far as I know, I have the only invisible cloak in existence now. Once there were many of them, but all have been lost except mine. I did not let anyone know that I possessed the cloak. They were made, in the long ago, by the Invisible Ones."

As she spoke the words a shadow of fear crossed her face.

"Who are the Invisible Ones?" King asked.

The fear on her face grew deeper.

"No one knows any more," she whispered. "They existed long ago. The legends say they were the gods of our race and that in the long ago they lived with our people and went daily among men. Then our people forgot their gods and became evil and in return the gods

hid themselves from the sight of men." She hesitated. "I do not know whether this is true or not. It happened many thousands of years before I was born. I think it is probable that the Invisible Ones were extremely wise men and that they learned, among other things, the secret of invisibility. I think probably our rulers in that long gone time grew jealous of the power of the wise men, and tried to conquer them, and the wise men hid themselves. Our legends say that the Invisible Ones still exist, that they come and go among us, hidden from our sight, punishing the wicked and rewarding the good. But I do not know. No one knows. No one of my generation has ever seen an Invisible One."

"They must have existed once," said King. "Your possession of that cloak proves it."

"I had the cloak from my mother, who had it from her mother. It is very old."

KING nodded. It was the age-old fight between science and politics, each seeking to rule the world. He did not doubt that the Invisible Ones had been the scientists of the ancient Atlantans. The scientists had gained too much power and the rulers had fought them and the scientists had hidden themselves away.

"This," said Sonthia, "is the temple of the Invisible Ones. You will be safe here. Even Dor Diavo will not trespass on these sacred premises. I, myself, scarcely dared to come here. But there was no other place to go, and I could not permit Dor Diavo to recapture you, Don King."

The shadow of fear was again on her face. King guessed how much courage it had taken to bring them here. She, too, had a superstitious awe of the gods —or mighty men—of her race. She did not like to trespass in their sacred places.

"Brave girl," said King.

"Do you think we're safe here?" Markham asked uneasily. "Somehow I don't like this place, Boss. It's full of —ghosts."

The sailor had been examining the temple of the Invisible Ones. It was a small building constructed of marble, entirely unornamented. It was full of shadows that seemed to flow with a strange liquid life of their own.

"This is the only place where we are safe," Sonthia answered. "As soon as the search dies down, we will find a boat and escape."

"But what about the rebellion?" King asked.

"It is lost," the girl answered. "Now that Dor Diavo knows there is a plot against him, he will be constantly on the alert. If we remain here, he will certainly find us in time. It will not be pleasant to be in the power of our ruler," she finished, her voice trembling.

King nodded. He did not need to guess what their fate would be if Dor Diavo captured them.

"What about your friends? You indicated others were with you in the plot to rebel. Won't Dor Diavo make things hot for them?"

"He doesn't know who they are. They will be safe enough, but our only hope is to escape. Can we not return to your land, Don King? Even Dor Diavo will not dare to follow us there."

"We not only can, we will," King answered. "And then we'll return here."

"Return here! Come back to the land where Dor Diavo rules?"

"Yes. With a hundred fighting men behind us, armed with rifles and submachine guns. Joe, do you know any husky lads who might be willing to do a little fighting?"

"I can get two hundred, if you want that many," Markham answered. "All I'll have to do will be go down to the docks, Boss," the sailor grinned, "we'll show Dor Diavo a thing or two about fighting."

"I'll say we will," King answered grimly. "But right now our only hope is to get out of here. Sonthia, lead the way to those boats. And be ready to make us invisible if we run into anybody."

King's pulse was leaping. At last they were in the clear. If they could escape—and with the aid of Sonthia's cloak of invisibility, there was little chance that they would fail—and return with a boat crammed to the rails with fighting men, then they could rescue this pitiful remnant of a vanished people from the dictator who ruled them.

And the Atlantans had much that they could give the world. Their history, stretching back into the mists of time, would be invaluable to science. Their knowledge, that clever device which generated invisibility, would be eagerly added to Twentieth Century science.

Don King could lead his lost people to their rightful heritage. He could not fail. Against high-powered rifles the armor and weapons of the guards of Dor Diavo would be worthless.

CAUTIOUSLY, every sense alert, they started out of the temple. Here and there in the city they would hear the guards searching for them.

"They'll have a sweet time finding us when we're invisible," Markham muttered.

Then a voice, speaking somewhere from the shadows around them, said harshly.

"Don King!"

The American jumped. His eyes darted from shadow to shadow, seeking the person who had spoken. He saw no one. His two companions looked at him.

"Who is it?" Sonthia said. "Did you see someone?"

"What's the matter, Boss?' Markham asked. "What did you jump like that for?"

"Someone called my name," King answered. He was aware that a sticky wash of perspiration had suddenly appeared in the palms of his hands.

"I heard no one," Sonthia said.

"Nobody said anything," Markham added. "You must have been hearing things, Boss."

"I know what I heard," King answered.

"Don King," the voice said again.

King whirled. The voice had seemed to come from behind him this time. He saw nothing. But the perspiration that had made his hands sticky was now spreading over his whole body.

"There it was again," he said.

"But no one spoke," Sonthia insisted, a note of desperate fear suddenly creeping into her voice.

"I didn't hear anything," Markham said uneasily.

"Seize the girl, Don King," the voice grated. *"Choke the treacherous she-devil to death."*

Then King realized what was happening. He was the reincarnation of Dor Diavo. And Dor Diavo, being the older incarnation, had power over him. Even when Dor Diavo had not known that he existed, the ruler's vagrant thought impulses, transmitted across thousands of miles of space, had been powerful enough to instill in King a wanderlust so strong he could not resist it. The *rapport* between the two men had been erratic, not subject to control, but when the ruler had raged at those who had op-

posed him, King's arms and legs had obeyed Dor Diavo's orders.

Now Dor Diavo had realized the power he held over the American. He was using it to order King to choke Sonthia to death. It was Dor Diavo's voice that King heard. The ruler was not present. He was somewhere else in the city, and his thought impulses were being transmitted to King's mind.

Sweat was pouring down King's face.

Sonthia's startled cry showed that she realized what was happening. The girl cowered away from him. Markham stood, indecision on his scarred face, staring in hopeless perplexity at the man whom he called master.

"Boss," the sailor whispered. "What's the matter with you? Why do you look at Sonthia like that, Boss?"

KING felt that old, incredible, helpless feeling creep over him. His muscles began to jerk, to lump into knots. His will power seemed to be leaving him. And he was helpless to prevent it.

"Fight, Don King," Sonthia whispered. "Fight!"

"I'm fighting," King gritted from between clenched teeth. Only he knew how violently he was fighting. Because the struggle was purely mental, involving no physical action, it was no less terrible. King stood in a half crouch, feet planted wide apart, arms drawn up for defense, fighting the control that was trying to clamp itself on to his mind, fighting Dor Diavo, fighting his other self.

"Damn you, Dor Diavo!" he ground out.

Somewhere in his mind the ruler laughed.

"Fight, Don King," he jeered. "Try and fight! The older incarnation has power over the younger. You are the younger, Don King. Fight like the very devil was after you. Fight!"

Sweat poured in a flood over King's body.

"Seize the girl, Don King," Dor Diavo's voice came whispering in his mind. Sieze her!"

King took one step toward Sonthia. She shrank before him.

"Please, Don," she begged, her eyes wide with fright.

"I'm trying, Sonthia," he gasped.

He took a second step toward her.

His legs were moving against his will. His hands were coming up, fingers spread like claws.

He was two men. The real Don King would not under any circumstances have harmed Sonthia. The minute he first saw her the real Don King had known that, if he had sought the vanished colonies of his people in Egypt and Central America, he had also sought something else—Sonthia. He had been seeking this girl out of ancient Atlantis. He had found her.

And Dor Diavo was forcing him to kill her.

"Fight!" the ruler jeered.

"Damn you—" King groaned.

He took the third step toward the girl. His fingers closed around her throat.

"Choke the she-devil," the sneering ruler ordered, his voice whispering in King's brain.

"Please, Don," she whispered, her face white in the shadows. "Don, I love you. Look at me, Don. Please, for my sake, fight!"

King groaned. His hands were no longer under his control. He realized what he was doing but he could not control his body. His fingers began to close around her throat.

He was going to choke her to death, he was going to kill her with his bare hands. And there was nothing he could do about it.

Shadows seemed to march across his mind. The shadows in the temple of the Invisible Ones seemed to swirl in circles.

Dor Diavo's laugh sounded.

"You're doing a good job, Don King," he gloated. "I couldn't throttle her better myself. See how her hands are tearing at your fingers, trying to pull them from her throat. See how her face is turning purple, her eyes bulging. Hear how she chokes. Note how her struggles are growing weaker. She won't last much longer, Don King.

"After she is dead, do you know what I am going to do to you? No, I'm not going to kill you. That would be too easy—for you. I'm going to imprison you, so you can remember all the rest of your life how you choked to death the girl who would have been your sweetheart. Isn't it clever of me, Don King, to think of that. Hah, hah, hah. . ." The ruler's laugh whispered evilly in King's brain.

KING turned a tortured face toward Joe Markham. The sailor was frightened almost out of his wits. His lips were moving in prayer and his face was seamed with terror. He did not understand what was happening. To him it seemed that King had suddenly gone crazy.

"*Slug me!*" King whispered.

"W—what?" the sailor stammered.

"Hit me!" King rasped. "Im not choking Sonthia because I want to. Hit me! Knock me out! It's the only way to save her life."

The girl's struggles had grown weaker.

"You mean that?" Markham gasped.

"I never meant anything more in my life," King answered. "You're not a reincarnation of Dor Diavo. He doesn't have control over you. Knock me out before he sends guards here."

Markham swung a ham-like fist. It drove straight to the point of King's jaw, sent a flash of white-hot pain through his brain. His fingers loosened. He staggered backward, collided with a column, fell to the floor. He wasn't out. He was dazed. And as he staggered and fell, he was laughing—with happiness. He had thwarted Dor Diavo. He had saved Sonthia's life.

"Save the girl," he whispered to Joe Markham. "Take care of her. Never mind me. And if I try to attack you again, knock hell out of me."

The sailor was already bending over Sonthia. She had fallen when King released her.

Whispering in King's mind from the distance came Dor Diavo's roar of rage.

"Damn you, King, you tricked me," the ruler snarled. "I deliberately left part of your mind free so you would know what you were doing. I wanted you to know you were killing her. But you tricked me. Well, trick me now, damn you!"

King felt a merciless pressure close over his mind. He tried to fight against it, but it clamped down like a vise. His brain felt like it was being squeezed as Dor Diavo tightened his control to exclude Don King's mind from his body.

"Get to your feet," the ruler snarled. "Destroy that treacherous she-devil. If that sailor tries to stop you, whip him. Beat him with your fists. But kill the girl. Do you understand me? Kill her!"

Slowly King came erect. His face was now utterly blank. All trace of the personality of the real Don King was gone from it. It was frozen, lifeless, like the face of a robot, or a zombie. And when he moved it was with the staggering, lifeless lurch of the zombie, of the living dead.

Markham glanced up as he approached.

"Get away from me, Boss," the sailor said.

King did not answer.

"Boss, I said for you to stay away," the sailor warned.

King kept coming. Lurching zombie-like, he advanced toward the pair.

"Kill them," Dor Diavo's voice shrieked in his brain.

MARKHAM rose to his feet. He lifted his fist.

King struck with all the speed of a striking cobra. His left lanced out like a battering ram. It struck the surprised sailor at the base of the ear and on the corner of the jaw. All of King's weight was behind it.

Markham had not been expecting the blow. His effort to hit King had been half-hearted. He didn't want to hit his boss. Don King struck with all the fury of Dor Diavo. King's mind seethed with the ruler's lust to kill. Don King was no longer Don King. He was Dor Diavo. And he struck as Dor Diavo would have struck if he had had the opportunity and the ability.

Markham went down like a stunned ox.

King turned toward the girl.

"You're next," Dor Diavo's voice rasped from his lips. "You rebelled against me and you know the penalty for that. You wanted Don King to cuddle you in his arms, didn't you. Well, get ready. He's going to cuddle you in a way you will never forget." The ruler laughed. King moved toward the helpless girl.

She was conscious. Her face was still purple from the choking she had received but she was recovering rapidly.

"Please, Don. . ." she whispered.

King's fingers reached for her.

And closed on empty air. Her hand darted toward the ornament at her waist, the tiny flute-note sounded, a fluorescent blur folded over her. She had become invisible.

King stopped. He couldn't see her.

"Feel for her!" the ruler's raging voice rasped in his brain.

King obeyed. He couldn't find her.

"Throttle the unconscious sailor," the ruler roared. "Then come to me. My guards will find the girl all right. Throttle the sailor and come to me."

King turned toward Joe Markham. He was just in time to see the sailor's body blur into invisibility as Sonthia extended the cloak of the Invisible Ones over him.

"All right," Dor Diavo rasped. "My guards will find them. You come to me, Don King. I have something waiting for you."

On leaden feet Don King turned and walked from the temple of the long-gone Invisible Ones. His mind was a complete blank. He didn't know what he was doing. All he knew was that he was obeying an order that he could not resist. He had no inkling of what waited for him at the hands of Dor Diavo. As he walked out of the temple the shadows seemed to blur around him, shadows as dark as the shadows in his mind.

CHAPTER VII

The Invisible Ones

"WHICH form of death do you prefer, man from Mayan?" Dor Diavo questioned. "Would you like the death that comes from having a needle thrust slowly past and through the eyeball, would you prefer the death from serpents, would you like to be beaten to death, and would you perhaps choose the death that comes from having molten lead poured slowly down your throat?"

They were in a room in the place to

which King, moving like a walking dead man, had come. There Dor Diavo, flanked by guards, had waited for him. Guards were constantly coming and going as they reported the progress of the search for Sonthia and Markham. The uncanny hypnosis that had settled down over King's mind had been relaxed. His brain was clear, so that he clearly understood what was happening. But he had no control over his body.

Dor Diavo preferred it that way. He had deliberately relaxed his uncanny control over the man who was his reincarnation so King could understand what was happening.

King's face was expressionless. He stood without moving. Only his eyes were alive. And they seemed to be filled with tiny flakes of flame.

King saw the sadism on Dor Diavo's face. The ruler would derive great pleasure from torturing him. And in Dor Diavo's easy enumeration of different horrible ways of inflicting death, King saw that torture was no new thing in this world. He saw why Sonthia had rebelled against this ruler, why the Atlantans themselves must have always been on the verge of rebellion. And, if Dor Diavo was a fair sample of the rulers of the old time, he saw why the ancient scientists had hidden themselves away in invisibility. Even in a civilized world, the death of a criminal was sometimes necessary. But civilization tried to make that death as easy as possible.

Dor Diavo was just the opposite. He preferred to make death as hideous as possible, as cruel as the mind could devise.

In every human being there is both good and evil. King was the personification of what is best in the human race, Dor Diavo of what is worst.

"Make up your mind," the ruler rasped. "Which way do you prefer to die?"

"Does it make any difference, which I prefer?" King answered. There was defiance in his voice.

The ruler was taken aback. It had been his experience that men crawled before him, begged in whining voices for the boon of an easy death. But here was a man who did not crawl.

"You dare to defy me?" he shouted.

"No," King answered levelly. "I do not defy you. You are beneath defiance."

Dor Diavo's face flamed scarlet, then went white as anger shook him.

"I will show you whether you can trick me into giving you an easy death," he said.

"I am not trying to trick you into anything," King answered. "Do with me as you will. There is nothing I can do to oppose you."

HE meant it. He was no longer concerned about himself. Even if he had a chance, he could not escape, for Dor Diavo, exerting his terrible mental power, could call him back. Nor would King fight. Dor Diavo held him powerless. His only remaining hope was that Sonthia and Markham had had time to escape. If Sonthia could reach the boat as she promised, Markham could sail it. And they should have had time to reach the boat by now. They had certainly not been captured or the guards would have brought them here.

"Very well, Don King," Dor Diavo snapped. "I have decided what to do with you."

"And what is that?"

"You will commit suicide," Dor Diavo answered, "by drinking molten lead."

"I will not!" King started to say. Then he realized that if Dor Diavo

"Strangle the girl!" came the insistent command in Don King's brain. "Kill her!"

willed him to drink molten lead, he would drink it. There was nothing he could do to prevent it. His mind was now his own and he could talk. But he could not move another muscle of his body. He could not even lift his hand to wipe the sweat from his face.

But—to die from drinking molten lead!

There was a horrible choking sensation in his throat. He coughed, and choked.

At the wave of Dor Diavo's hand two guards went racing off. They returned quickly, bearing with them a small cauldron in which a grayish mass of metal was smoking. The lead had been taken from a fire. Apparently it was always kept ready.

Swiftly the guards set up a tripod, hung the cauldron on it, built a fire. The blaze licked up around the edges of the pot.

King stared with horrible fascination at the metal. The pot was small. It did not hold over a pint. It would come back to a boil all the quicker because of the small quantity. There would not be enough for more than a single draught.

One draught would be enough.

"It comes to a boil," Dor Diavo said. "Look at it, man who would take my place. See the bubbles already forming on the surface. It will warm your stomach!" the ruler laughed. "It will warm your gullet as it goes down."

The guards laughed with him. They were looking forward with evident enjoyment to what was coming.

Sweat ran down King's forehead and got in his eyes, making them smart. Desperately he tried to move himself but not even his little finger would answer to his will. He could only stare at that horribly bubbling cauldron. He saw the guards bring in a small cup with a long handle. The lead would be poured into that and the cup handed to him.

The lead was boiling freely now.

"Pour the draught," Dor Diavo ordered.

THE cauldron was tipped and the molten metal ran in a gray stream into the cup. Holding it with tongs, the guards brought the cup to King.

"Take it," Dor Diavo rasped. "Drink deep, Don King, because it will be a long time before you have another chance to quench your thirst."

Involuntarily, against his will, King's right hand went out toward the handle of the cup.

This was the end. There was nothing he could do to help himself. His hand moved against his will. And against his will, his hand would carry the cup to his lips, his mouth would gulp at the molten metal, a searing blaze would race down his throat. *Then,* in all probability Dor Diavo would release his body, at least partly, so he and his guards could enjoy the death agonies of this helpless man.

King reached for the cup.

"You must release this man, Dor Diavo," a voice said. "You must sever the chain that binds him to you, you must dissolve the mental bond by which you control him."

The voice spoke from the air.

It was not Sonthia's voice, nor was it the voice of Joe Markham. It was no voice that King had ever heard before.

It froze into instant silence every sound in the room. Dor Diavo's face went blotchy white. His eyes darted over his guards.

"Who spoke?" he demanded.

The guards shifted uneasily.

"Which one of you said that?" the ruler rasped.

"None of my men spoke, your majes-

ty," their captain answered.

"Don't lie to me. I heard someone speak. Who was it?"

"We spoke," the voice said.

In front of King's eyes, directly between him and the ruler, the air seemed to blur. Far-off, a tiny harp note throbbed. The blur dissolved. Three people stood there, two men and a woman.

They were clad all in white. At a glance it was obvious that they were old, incredibly old. Later, King would wonder what made him think these three people were old. It was not their skin. That was smooth and flawless, a delicate brown color. Nor were their faces wrinkled. It was their eyes, he decided, and the calmness with which they stood before Dor Diavo. Their eyes were old. All passions and all hates had been washed out of their eyes, and all fear. Only compassion remained, and a wisdom that was beyond the understanding, a wisdom so deep and so ancient that it was appalling.

Who were they, King wondered. Where had they come from? Why had they appeared here?

"The Invisible Ones!" a guard gasped.

The Invisible Ones! The gods of Atlantan legend, or the scientists of ancient Atlantis, who had lost a battle in the old time and had hidden themselves away. They hadn't perished. They hadn't died. Or at least all of them hadn't. They had come forward into the new time, come across the maddening gulf of time with Dor Diavo when he had fled the tragedy that had destroyed their homeland. They had come into this new world, still invisible, still hidden away.

And now they were revealing themselves!

"We spoke," they seemed to say all together. "It has been our policy never to interfere with the rulers of Atlantis, for we have learned that in most instances the people of a land receive exactly the government they deserve. If the rulers are bad, it is because the people are bad. Nor can an outside force, such as we represent, lift the people up. They must lift themselves. For that reason, we have never before interfered with an Atlantan ruler.

"But now has come one who would lead the remnant of our people upward instead of down. You, Dor Diavo, would destroy that one. We shall not interfere to prevent you from doing this, if you can. But you must fight a fair battle. Therefore, Dor Diavo, you must dissolve the mental bond by which you control Don King—"

IN these words, softly spoken, King caught a glimpse of a keen justice working inscrutably to reach its own ends. The Invisibles would set him free —to fight. They would not fight his battles for him. That was wisdom. That was justice. A man must stand on his own feet and fight. That was what King wanted.

The face of the ruler was blotchy. He stared incredulously at the three calm figures facing him. He seemed to think he was being tricked. He looked like a sullen boy suddenly in fear of punishment, but doubting if he can be punished.

"Do you accept?" the three questioned.

"Seize them!" the ruler rasped at his guards.

His men had little stomach for the business. But when their captain barked an order at them, they started forward.

One of the three invisibles turned toward the guards. There was nothing hurried in his movements. He glanced at the men coming toward him. Something flashed in his hand as he waved it.

The guards stopped. A wave of force seemed to flow out to them. They stopped.

The Invisible One turned back to the ruler.

"So we must force you, Dor Diavo?" they said, still speaking in that strange unison that sounded like a single voice. "Well, so be it."

One of them took from under his robe a little crystal box. He opened the lid. A tiny arrangement of crystals, sparkling like glass beads strung on silver wire, unfolded from the interior of the box.

"Your control of Don King is based on telepathic hypnosis," the three said. "And telepathy is transmitted as is"—here they glanced at King—"radio in the land from which you came. Telepathy is in fact a form of mental radio.* Your mind and the mind of Dor Diavo are tuned to each other, his is the transmitter, yours the receiver. We will merely distort the tuning, so that you will no longer receive the radiations transmitted from his mind."

A tinkling, silver note came from the crystal antennae. It chimed, and chimed again, making a note like the harmony that would come from the tuning fork of an elf.

"That is all," the three said.

The throbbing harp sounded.

A blur of light seemed to fold around the three.

They faded into nothingness.

DOR DIAVO stood like a man in a trance, his blotched face working and distorted, his eyes blinking as if to dispel an illusion from his mind. He seemed to fight to gain control of himself.

"An illusion!" he snarled. "A trick of some kind. There was nothing here. King, I command you. Drink that cup of molten lead."

King had taken the dipper in his hands. The long handle was hot. It seared his fingers but he held on to it.

"Yes, Your Majesty," he answered. There was a wry, wretched smile on his face. His throat worked as if the lead were already burning it. He lifted the cup.

His hand came back in a sinuous motion. He flung the dipper of molten metal straight at Dor Diavo!

"Try some of your own medicine, you dirty devil!"

The instant the tinkling, silver note had come from the crystal antennae on the little box, King had felt the hypnosis relax. For an instant a keen agony fluttered through his brain, like hundreds of microscopic knives severing nerve connections, breaking synapses, changing subtly the flow of nervous currents through his mind. For a second, while that tiny tuning fork throbbed, the microscopic knives seemed to slice through his brain. Then the note died, and the flashing pain was gone.

The control that chained King's body went with it. Gone, that leaden heaviness in his mind. Gone, that cramped pain in his muscles. Gone, Dor Diavo's control!

He was free. *Free!*

Free to fling at the leering ruler the molten death he had been condemned to drink!

Droplets of lead swirled from the cup. All of the contents didn't touch Dor Diavo. The dipper itself

* It has long been suggested that mental waves are emanated by the brain, and that it would be possible to pick up these waves by mechanical means, such as ultra-short radio. Obviously, in Atlantis, the scientists of 14,000 years ago, carried forward by the Invisible Ones, had devised a method of doing exactly that. Thus, they were able to tune in on the mental vibrations of Don King, and of Dor Diavo, and so influence them with interference that a change in wavelength resulted. After this, Dor Diavo was unable to get his own mind en rapport with Don King's, and his control was gone.—Ed.

missed. But drops of that molten metal struck him. Unlike his guards, he was not in armor. Metal splashed on his face, his hands, his arms.

His scream rilled through the air like a dagger of sound.

"How do you like your own medicine?" Don King grated.

Dor Diavo slapped at the drops of molten metal. He looked like a man suddenly possessed by demons. He squalled, and throwing himself on the floor, rolled over and over as he tried to get away from the fire that was burning him, the fire that he had intended for King.

His men leaped forward to help him. King knew what would happen next. Dor Diavo wasn't badly hurt. His burns were painful but not serious. As soon as he recovered from his shock he would be in a raging fury. King turned to run. His one thought was to hide until he could contact the three Invisible Ones, or, failing in that, until he could find Sonthia and Markham.

"Grab that man!" he heard Dor Diavo yell. "Don't let him escape."

King headed toward the door. Guards leaped to cut him off. They got to the exit before he did. A line of sharp sword points blocked his escape. His body was free of Dor Diavo's control, but he was still trapped. Trapped! He skidded to a stop.

"This time you won't escape," Dor Diavo raged.

The ruler, angry red blotches on his face where the lead had struck him, had regained his feet and was stalking toward the American. There had never been any pity on Dor Diavo's face. Now it was suffused with a blinding rage.

"I guess you win after all," said King.

"I'm damned if that's so," a heavy voice said. "Here, Boss, take this."

There was a commotion among the guards. A bulky body seemed to force its way through their ranks. King could not see the body. But he could see two things moving toward him. They were hanging in the air.

Pistols! His and Markham's pistol. And it had been Markham's voice who spoke.

"Take the gun, Boss," the sailor said, his voice coming from thin air. "We'll make these monkeys wish they had never been born."

King grabbed one of the guns. Simultaneously he saw a sword tear itself out of the hand of a guard, and he knew that Sonthia, having secured the weapons the Atlantans had taken from them, had come to rescue him. They only had two pistols so Sonthia had to use a sword.

Thunderous blasts of pistol fire roared through the room.

CHAPTER VIII

"LORD, Boss!" Joe Markham gasped. "Those shields are made of better metal than I thought. Bullets don't go through them."

Dor Diavo, the second he had seen the guns appear, had guessed what was happening. He had promptly dived behind his men and then had leaped to the protection of a heavy stone pillar. From the protection of this he ordered his men to charge. His men obeyed. They didn't for a minute like to face the thundering guns, but obedience had been beaten into them. The guards in front of the door held their positions. The others advanced, shields up, swords ready. A circle of grim-faced men closed in around the two. Sonthia had broken contact with Markham and he had become visible. And because the two men were visible, the girl had chosen to become visible also.

King fired at the advancing men.

The Atlantan at whom he had been aiming ducked behind his shield. The heavy slug whanged into the metal and ricocheted violently across the room.

"Is something wrong with your weapons?" Sonthia asked nervously.

"Boss, we better get to hell out of here," Markham added.

King turned toward the door.

"Fire at their legs, he said grimly. "If we can knock down the guards at the door, we'll have a chance to escape."

The legs of the Atlantans were protected by mail, but it did not have the thickness of the shields. King sent a bullet screaming into the men at he door. He aimed low.

A guard toppled.

"That's the stuff!" King shouted. "Aim low. Knock their legs out from under them. We'll have a chance to escape yet."

He fired again. The gun in Markham's hand crashed in unison with his. A ragged hole opened in the ranks of the Atlantans.

"Through that hole!" King ordered. "Joe, you go first. Then Sonthia. I'll bring up the rear."

Like a full-back smashing through tackle, the sailor hit the hole. Frantically the guards tried to close it up. Markham's gun exploded twice. Then it clicked on an empty cartridge. Clubbing it, the sailor struck at the men opposing him.

King, looking back over his shoulder, saw the guards, urged on by Dor Diavo, racing across the room toward them. Only seconds remained to fight their way through the men at the door. Seconds!

"Come on, Boss," Markham yelled. "There's a hole here big enough to drive a truck through."

The sailor, fighting like a cornered lion, had cleared the way. King shoved Sonthia through and into the clear. He dived behind her.

"Quickly," the girl said. "We must get away."

They raced through the door and into the night. Behind them shouts sounded as Dor Diavo organized his men for pursuit.

"The boat!" Sonthia panted. "It is this way."

King hesitated.

"What about the Invisible Ones?" he asked. "Can't we go to them? Won't they help us? And incidentally, how did they happen to turn up so pat the first time?"

"Sonthia found them," Markham answered. "They were in their temple. From what they said, they had been there all the time, only nobody ever knew it because they hadn't wanted to be seen. She got our guns for us too. Slipped into the prison and found them."

"But won't they help us against Dor Diavo?" King answered.

"No," the girl answered. "They said that if we deserved to overcome him, we would succeed. If our hearts were pure and our motives worthy, we would win out. They were only willing to release the control Dor Diavo had over you. Everything else we must do for ourselves. I doubt if they would ever reveal themselves to us again."

"The boat is about our only chance, Boss," Markham said. "Sonthia brought the guns but she didn't know to bring the extra cartridges. All the shells we've got is what are left in the guns, and mine is already empty. We better grab that boat and take a flier out of here. Once we get out on the shipping lanes, we're sure to be picked up."

"All right," King assented. "But we'll come back."

"You damned right we will," the

sailor answered. "If I understand this thing right, I had a double back here too. Dor Diavo killed him, which leaves me with a little score of my own to settle."

THE guards were again ranging through the city after them. Creeping stealthily along, following back streets and avoiding the main thoroughfare, slipping along the edges of the dark canals, they reached the boat.

King had been expecting to find something like a galley that they would have to row. The best he had hoped for was a light sailing craft. Instead Sonthia led them to a sleek-hulled little vessel that looked like a sea-going launch. King stared at it in perplexity.

"You were expecting a barge?" the girl asked. "A vessel with slaves to row it? Dor Diavo uses such a craft occasionally, but only to impress us with the fact that he is our ruler. His barge that the slaves row is for state occasions, but when anyone is sent to sea, we use these little ships. Dor Diavo invented them just before the catastrophe in the old time. They carry their own power and move very swiftly."

"Do you know how to operate it?" King questioned.

"Certainly. You merely press buttons and it goes. But get in quickly. Dor Diavo's men may find us any minute."

They entered the boat. Under the girl's skilled fingers, it slid along the dark canals, passed through the tremendous pool where the sailing vessel on which they had taken passage from New York still floated, and started toward the dark exit that led out to the open sea.

Just as they approached the opening, a shrill hail sounded.

"They've seen us!" King snapped. "Open this thing up and get us out of here before they start after us."

He had been holding his breath for fear they would be seen. Now it had happened.

Sonthia gave the little craft all the power it had. Whatever was the source of energy utilized to drive the vessel, it was darned efficient. A powerful roar came from the interior. The launch lifted its nose, and sending rolling a great bow wave, raced through the opening and out to the open sea.

"We're away!" Joe Markham gloated. "We've got 'em beat by a mile. They'll never be able to catch us now. We're loose."

There was ringing exultation in the sailor's voice.

The dark island slipped behind them.

"We've got 'em licked, Boss," Markham gloated again.

As if in refutation there came, from the darkness of the island they were leaving, a cry.

"Kra—*kor!*"

Shrill and clear, it came winging across the waters.

"Kra—*kor!*"

"THE monster!" Markham gasped. "The thing that grabbed our ship. I'd forgotten all about it."

"I hadn't," King said grimly. He stood up and looked back. There was nothing he could see. The thing was too far away as yet. But he could hear it splashing behind them. And he could also hear the throb of another power boat following them.

The pursuit was already organized. The Atlantans were coming. And they were bringing that incredible sea creature that had attacked and destroyed the stout sailing vessel.

"Can we out run it?" King whispered to Sonthia.

(Continued on page 128)

Before Stan Leigh could prevent, the Bat-Man snatched Tanya Snow off the ground

MYSTERY on Planetoid Ten

By JAMES NORMAN

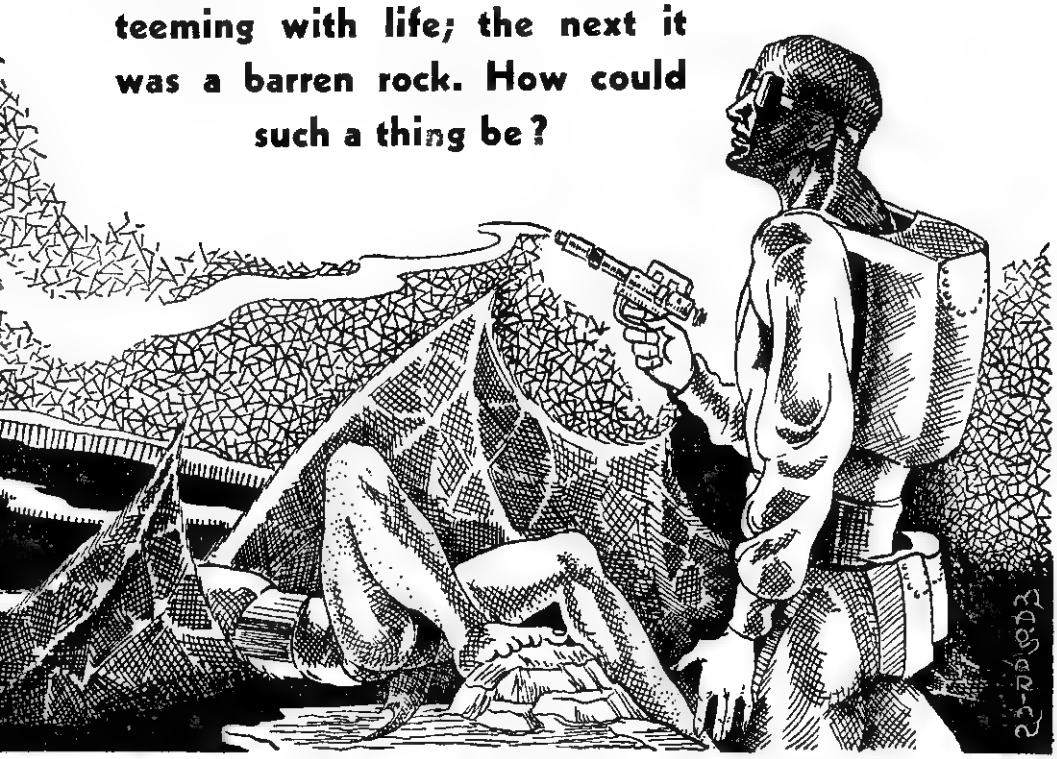
"ATTENTION!—Ladies and Gentlemen," the newsreel commentator's rich voice boomed through the theater. "A Spacefoto Company camera scout has finally cracked through the dangerous asteroid belt guarding mysterious Planetoid Ten . . .

"We interrupt our regular program, bringing you a surprise showing of the *only* pictures actually taken there!"

As the voice paused, an excited murmur ran through the theater. A thousand pairs of eyes centered upon the all-color screen, waiting, anxious. Planetoid Ten had suddenly become news, big news. It had captured the popular fancy of the world.

"A few days ago," the commentator's clear-cut voice continued, "a competing news service, Telanews Incorporated, released pictures supposedly taken by Explorer Egon Snow." The commentator's voice paused, dramati-

One minute this crazy world was teeming with life; the next it was a barren rock. How could such a thing be?



cally. "Those Telanews shots were faked! We have definite proof that Snow never returned with such pictures . . . Egon Snow died on Planetoid Ten!"

A sudden, startled gasp of surprise swept through the theater.

Then a series of starlit pictures flashed upon the screen, showing the surface of a craggy, barren planetoid. A single small moon hurtled over the horizon, throwing faint illumination upon the torn hull of a space-ship.

An excited thrill ran through the commentator's voice.

"Planetoid Ten! We landed here with tremendous difficulty. Here, at last, we located Snow's wrecked space-ship. The explorer's body could not be located. He probably wandered away from his ship. It is certain that he died —for there is absolutely no air here . . .

"And nowhere is there a sign of the luxuriant plant life, the fabulous flying men or strange animals that the Telanews Corporation would have the world believe exists on Planetoid Ten. It's a bleak, foreboding land . . ."

"Liar!" a voice challenged from the rear of the theater. "That's a damn lie! Snow never faked a picture. Nor did Telanews."

There was a sudden commotion. The picture on the screen stopped and the lights went on. A husky young man with a petulant curve to his lips became the center of attention.

"Who do you think you are?" someone jeered.

"I'm Stan Leigh, Telanews camera scout."

Another taunting voice cut in:

"Okay, Leigh. Give us the low-down on how your company faked those Planetoid Ten pictures last week?"

Stan Leigh vaulted over a row of seats and grabbed the speaker by the collar. "That's a rotten lie," he growled. "Take that back or I'll—"

"Fake! Fake!" A dozen voices burst forth in unison.

"He ought to be shot. The whole bunch of them ought to be thrown in jail. Fakers."

The spirit of mob action swept through the theater as men crowded closer upon Leigh. Irate voices rasped at him. Angry fists shook before his face.

Suddenly a squad of gaudily dressed ushers swooped down the aisle and closed in upon the center of the disturbance. Someone pushed. Leigh's fist lashed out, connecting with a beefy jaw. Then hands grabbed him.

"Let me go!" Leigh shouted.

A moment later he was rushed up the aisle and tossed unceremoniously upon the Times Square pavement in front of the theater. Six husky ushers brushed their uniforms and stood there to see that he didn't come back.

"You guys just stick around," Leigh called back at them. "I'll be around soon as I get myself stinking mad."

With that he dusted himself off and made a bee-line for the Telanews offices, his anger mounting with each second that passed.

WILLIAM HARP, general manager of Telanews Incorporated, was swallowing his eighth bicarbonate tablet when Stan burst into the offices.

"Oh, my God!" Harp groaned. "For Heaven sakes, Leigh, get out! Don't bother me!"

"Who the devil's bothering you?" snapped Stan. "I've got something to talk to you about."

Harp made a helpless, tragic gesture, indicating the late editions of the newspapers scattered upon his desk. The banner head, with its ink still damp, screamed:

PLANETOID HOAX—EXPLORER DEAD

"It's terrible," said Harp. "Snow was a fine man. It's a tragic loss, but I can't understand why he did this to us?"

"What?"

Harp suddenly snorted. "Look at this!"

He seized a pile of telegrams and canceled contracts, throwing them at Leigh.

"That," said Harp, "is where we stand. The corporation is on the verge of being ruined. It's serious. We've lost sixty percent of our contracts because of this Spacefoto exposé and people are already hinting that we're responsible for Snow's death."

Leigh's boss walked to the office window and groaned again.

Six stories below, upon the sheer wall of a glastex office building, a television screen re-showed the Spacefoto exposé that Stan had protested against in the theater. Thousands of people riding along the suspended highways were drinking it in.

"Imagine," said Harp, "Snow sending us a feature like that Planetoid Ten series. How was I to know it's a barren planetoid? Sure the picture was good—but it backfired. Did he fake it?"

Stan's eyes flashed a look of sudden anger at his boss.

"Snow was our best man," he said sharply. "He's not that kind of a guy. He spent plenty of time out there digging up odd features for Telanews. He's honest and I'm sticking by him."

Harp fastened his owlish gaze upon Stan. He shrugged helplessly.

"I'm thinking of the company too," he said. "We're faced with complete ruin. We'll have to close our offices unless we can prove to the public's satisfaction that Snow's pictures weren't faked. How are we going to do it? It's driving me mad!"

Stan pushed his gesticulating boss aside and stared through the window. Suddenly he turned to Harp, saying:

"Where the hell could Snow have gotten fake props to make a picture on that planetoid? You yourself said he brought the shot back to our Venus office and disappeared again." Stan lowered his voice, adding, *"Maybe you know where he is.* Maybe you cooked this gag up yourself."

"Forget it," said Harp. "This is serious."

"Damn serious," Leigh answered. "I didn't like the looks of Snow's spacecruiser in the Spacefoto reel. If he had crashed on the planetoid the prow would have dug in . . . It didn't!"

Mr. Harp jumped as if he had been struck by a bolt of lightning. "You mean you think he's—"

HARP put his two pudgy hands on Leigh's shoulders. "Leigh," he half-pleaded, "I want you to go out there . . . Planetoid Ten . . . Find out for certain. You'll be performing a public duty."

Stan shrugged the man's hands aside.

"What a sweet, public-minded citizen you are," he answered sarcastically. "You probably told Snow something like that before you sent him off into that death-trap!"

"Stop that!" Harp cried, his face reddening. "You're through!"

Stan straightened up, a queer expression flickering across his face.

"Say that again?" he asked.

"You're fired!" Harp snapped.

For an instant, Leigh stared at his boss. A hard line of determination was set across his mouth. Then he stepped toward the door.

"Okay. I'm through," he said, turning at the door. "But you haven't heard

the end of this."

"Wait," cried Harp. He ran to the door, stopping Leigh. "Wait a minute, boy. I didn't mean it that way."

Although distrustful of the sudden, solicitous change in his boss, Stan halted, waiting. Harp couldn't afford to have his second best camera scout demanding a public investigation of the Snow case.

"Have you seen Egon Snow's daughter?" Harp suddenly asked.

"No. Why?"

Harp shrugged.

"Well, we haven't heard from her. I think she was along with Snow."

"Why the devil didn't you say so!" Stan snapped with irritation.

A worried frown knitted his brow. Tanya Snow, the pretty, vivacious daughter of the explorer was in trouble. That hit Stan like a stunning blow. He had already had ideas about Tanya, though most of them were still in the day-dream stages.

Suddenly he grabbed Harp's desk-phone.

"Hello," he shouted. "Give me the spaceport . . . no . . . here, Harp! You tell them to get my cruiser in shape, supplies, course, oxygen."

He shoved the phone into his boss' hand.

"What are you going to do?" Harp gasped.

"What am I going to do?" said Stan impatiently. "I'm going after Snow and Tanya. That's what!"

"But they're—"

"Shut up. I'll bring them back because I don't think they're dead."

A look, both crafty and doubtful, glowed in Harp's owlish eyes.

"Good," he said. "You'll get a promotion if you do. But you've got to promise to bring them back if you find them. You sign this contract. They've got to come back!"

GUNNING his little space-cruiser until the rocket dial indicated full percussion, Stan Leigh set his eyes straight ahead upon the dark, strange surface looming in the distant void.

"Crazy planetoid!" he muttered.

Planetoid Ten had been the last body discovered in the Sirius, north-ecliptic tangent. It revolved around the sun, following a staggered, elliptical course which had at first astonished Earth astronomers.

A hundred miles off the planetoid, Leigh encountered the strangest marvel in all the heavens—the asteroid belt. A hundred thousand spinning bodies that formed a kind of outer shell around the inner planetoid.

"Here goes," Leigh mumbled tensely, gritting his teeth and jerking the controls. He cut the gravs until the tiny cruiser tilted suddenly and dived headlong, screaming toward the belt. "Black asteroids -who could have thought of that!"

With a steady, iron hand, he guided the ship into the only known channel through the belt. Dark masses shot by, some frighteningly close to the portholes.

The little cruiser gave a sudden lurch, rocking in its course. Leigh jammed the controls to the right. Sweat poured from his brow. A jagged mass tore against the cruiser side, ripping part of the port-rocket jets.

There was no time to set the controls to automatic and inspect the damage. From the way the cruiser still responded to the controls Leigh judged that it had not been too disastrous. But it had been close; too close for comfort!

The ship burst beneath the asteroid blanket in full view of the tiny planetoid.

Leigh stared in astonishment at the utter bleakness of the landscape as he

leveled off the cruiser and skimmed within a half mile of the rugged surface. A sense of dismay seized him. No body in the universe could be like this. Not even the moon!

"I've been a damn fool!" he thought. "Trusted Snow too much. I should have believed it when I saw those Spacefoto pictures."

At the end of a slight level he spotted a space-ship. Then he blinked incredibly. *There were two space-ships!* One, he recognized from the news reels. It was Snow's. The polished metal of both crafts shimmered in the weird moonlight.

Taking a turn over the field and operating now with compressed air jets instead of rocket blasts, Stan brought his cruiser down with a scudding slide. It stopped a few yards from Snow's ship. As he let himself out of the air-lock, he took the precaution to slip a Seabold Heat gun into his belt.

His space-suit ballooned around his body and he knew, from the atmospheric indicator, that the air content on Planetoid Ten's surface was at absolute zero. And yet, strangely, the mean temperature wasn't as low as it should have been.

Suddenly he stopped! He stared in astonishment at Snow's abandoned ship. It had not crashed. *The ship was dismantled!*

The hull plates had been taken off; and taken off carefully. The air-lock door was gone, pin-bolts and all. The machinery within the compartments had also been taken the air compressors, generators and even the electric stove.

The strange desolation, the constant silence and unanswerable questions that shrouded Snow's ship brought an odd feeling creeping up the base of Stan's spine.

"Where is Snow? Who took the ship apart?" Leigh muttered to himself.

HE could not help but shudder as he moved toward the second space-cruiser that stood a short distance away, silent and mysterious. He glanced to the left and right, his senses alert, conscious of some hidden menace lurking in the craggy shadows of the planetoid.

The second space-cruiser was a newer model, a long bullet-like hull. Cautiously, he edged around it, finding nothing. Then he pulled out his heat gun, gripping it tightly, while with his right hand he touched the ship's air-lock button.

The door swung open with the low, hissing sound of escaping air. Stan rapped his gun against the metal cruiser wall.

A dead silence prevailed.

Hitching the heat gun in his hand, he clambered aboard and entered the control chamber of the silent ship.

"Hello! Anyone here?" he called through his portable radio transmitter.

A mute stillness mocked his words. Again the unbidden chill crept up his spine. Something hidden and unaccountable watched him. He whirled abruptly at the suspicion of a sound—there was nothing there but the gaping stillness.

Then, in the machine compartment, he stumbled and gasped with surprise as his hand touched the air compressor unit —it was still warm!

"My God!" he said hoarsely. "This ship hasn't been here more than a half hour!"

His mind raced madly, trying to fit things together. Who else could have dared navigate the asteroid belt? Were they out there watching him, waiting until he dropped his guard? What was the connection with Snow's dismantled cruiser? In the back of his mind,

something warned him of trouble ahead.

A PINKING haze crowded the Planetoid Ten landscape when Stan stepped from the air-lock of the second space-ship. The sun was rising and he was able to make out the mysterious foot-prints that moved from the space-ship, off toward a low ridge of hill to his right.

At the same time, curls of vapor began rising from the planetoid's surface. It became apparent that the ground, instead of being rocky and bleak as at night, was a tremendous mass of dank pools, marshes and mud flats. Hard ridge-like paths criss crossed the marshes.

Amidst the curling vapors a strange thing happened. Leigh stared, wide-eyed and unbelieving.

Purplish plants and broad leaved ferns were sprouting all over the place, growing to gigantic heights. The change came with incredible swiftness; leaves opening, jungle verdage spreading out like the jerky spreading of a fan. Iridescent chains of soap-like bubbles floated among the leaves. Fetid mist crawled over the ferns while startling, fantastic insects buzzed heavily past.

"My Lord!" Leigh gasped. "There must be air here!"

He twisted the portable atmospheric gauge attached to his suit. The needle was crawling upward steadily; the atmospheric pressure seeming to increase with the rise of the blatant, disc-like sun.

He opened the trap on his quartz helmet, carefully sniffing the fetid air, not certain whether it was pure or poisonous. Then he jerked his helmet off and breathed in deeply.

"Air!" he cried. "Good, honest-to-God air!"

Leigh brushed the sweat from his brow. The feeling of dizziness within him wasn't merely the product of the incredible changes happening before his eyes . . . Stone's original pictures of the planetoid *were* right. And it also meant — Leigh's spine tingled — what other unknown, menacing things did this planetoid hold?

The foot-prints that he had been following soon vanished, swallowed up by the soft, marshy earth. The sun climbed and the planetoid began to stew. The going became difficult. Leigh strained to see through the lush, sudden jungle.

Then he stopped dead in his tracks.

Something moved just ahead. He jerked the Seabold Heat gun from his belt and advanced warily. A moment later his teeth clamped on a low whistle of surprise.

An indescribable native, a man if one could call it that, moved in a slight clearing ahead. Leigh blinked at the willow creature; at the yellow, moist skin, the webbed feet and platter like hands. The native's head was well proportioned, although it came to a bullet point at the top.

Leigh held his breath and crept up cautiously, his finger prepared to squeeze the heat gun trigger instantaneously.

Then he relaxed a little. The strange native gave little sign of being savage. At the moment he was busily using the edge of his platter hands to cut fruit from the fern trees.

Stan's eyes widened even more when the native piled the fruit into the tentacles of a balloon-like jellyfish that hovered in the air just above him. Suddenly the native clapped his hands sharply, sending the greenish jellyfish sailing off into the sky.

A twig snapped beneath Leigh's foot. The native whirled, startled. Upon seeing Leigh, the look of fear faded

from his yellow face and something that might have passed for a smile appeared.

"You friend?" said the native in a twittering voice.

STAN gulped in astonishment. *That had been spoken in English.* It was the sort of pidgin English one hears on the frontier planets like Venus.

"Who in the blazes are you?" Stan demanded. "What are you?" he added in after-thought, "Man, woman or beast?"

The native abandoned the attempted smile as too difficult. "I . . . Moku . . . I, major-domo of all Mokus," he said

"Mokus?" said Stan.

"Mokus are people here," answered the native. "Fine people. Lot of us."

"Who taught you English?"

The native waved his platter hand in the direction of the hills, now obliterated by the wildly growing foliage. "Ister Noe," he replied.

"Noe?" Leigh kinked his brow.

"Like you, with white hair on chin," the native added, stroking an imaginary beard.

Suddenly Leigh grabbed the native.

"*Snow! Mister Snow!*—Leaping comets! He's safe? Where is he?"

The native danced up and down on his webbed feet, which was the best he could do to express a certain amount of pleasure at having conveyed an idea. He pointed toward the hills again, twittering,

"Noe. Noe. Me, major-domo."

Leigh grasped the native's sloping shoulder and headed him in the general direction of the hills.

"You show me, pronto," he said. "The quicker I find Snow and Tanya, the faster we'll show the Spacefoto crowd what's what. We'll bust them wide open."

As the pair pushed through the dank undergrowth, the native who was known as Charlie exhibited certain startling qualities. He cut vines that fell across the path with his platter hands, almost as if they were machetes. Twice, Stan had to stop him from short-cutting right across the mud marshes on his webbed feet.

Stan tried to straighten a few points out as they went.

"What the devil is the second spaceship doing on the planetoid?" he asked Charlie.

The native looked puzzled.

"Only one Ister Noe here," he insisted. "Nobody else."

"You're crazy," Stan answered. "I saw the other ship. And what about Snow's daughter?"

"Ister Noe here alone," Charlie replied bluntly.

Stan felt perturbed. The native was positive that Snow was here alone. There was a tightening around Stan's heart when he realized that the girl was not with her father. Where could she be? He was sure that she had come to Planetoid Ten.

In the distance, the clear sound of flapping wings intruded upon the busy hum of the jungle.

Charlie stiffened, listening intently. A look of dismay, then anger rushed into his large eyes.

"Soors!" he cried. "Soors come take Moku women."

He raced across the swamp-flats, his broad, webbed feet flapping upon the mushy surface.

"Hey! Wait!" Stan shouted. "I can't cut across that damn stuff. Sink up to my teeth."

"Soors!" Charlie the Moku screamed in a high pitched voice.

LEIGH plunged after the native, picking a reckless path along the hard ridges that wove through the

strange marshes. During a flashing instant he glimpsed a dozen strange flying creatures through the broken pattern of ferns overhead.

He came to the edge of a pampus-like field where the ground was quite solid. Then he stopped, gaping in astonishment. An uncontrollable chill ran down his spine.

A dozen weird, half-human, half-bat creatures circled in the air over the field. Leigh's blood ran cold at the sight of their hairy bodies, the kicking blunt legs, grasping arms and the stiff, beak-like stinger protruding from the snout of each creature.

They swooped down with a flapping of hideous, leathery wings, diving upon Charlie. The native ducked. A bat-man lunged at him, missed and flapped skyward. Charlie leaped to his feet again, steadying himself to face another plunging monster.

A second and third bat-creature swooped downward with whistling wings. Charlie cut at the first with his platter hands, slashing, whirling his arms like flashing knives.

The bat-man crashed into him, knocking him to the earth with a stunning blow. Charlie kicked madly, fighting with hands and feet. Suddenly a second person behind him charged the bat-man, beating the creature with a quartz space-helmet.

"Tanya!" Stan cried aghast.

With the words still tearing at his throat Stan charged across the clearing. A snap brought the heat gun twirling in his hands.

"Look out!" he roared, trying to divert the attack of the bat-men.

It worked. A bat-creature whirled in mid-air, flapping toward him with ungainly speed. Running at break-neck pace, Stan whipped up the gun muzzle. An orange burst of flame enveloped the weird creature. A horrible, agonized screech marked the earthward fall of the bat-man.

A sudden, tremendous blow struck Stan from behind. He reeled across the ground and felt the swoop of wings. Somehow he hung on to the heat gun, rolled madly to the side and came up on his knees.

He caught a glimpse of another creature diving sharply upon Charlie, suddenly swerving past his razor-edged hands, and seizing the girl. He heard Tanya's terrified scream.

"Charlie!" Stan yelled. "Save her!"

A wild flapping of wings drowned his cry of warning. The next instant Tanya was carried aloft, her slim body in the clutches of the hideous bat creature. She rained blows upon the *thing*, then suddenly her body became limp.

Leigh cursed and raised the heat gun.

"No! What the hell am I thinking of!" he said grimly, realizing the weapon would destroy both the girl and the ugly captor. He raged at himself, venting his frustrated anger at being unable to stop the bat-men as they wheeled away in the sky with their human prize.

"What the devil are they?" Leigh swore, shaking Charlie the Moku.

"Soors," the panting native gasped. "They want girl." A strange light suddenly crossed his face. "Who is girl?"

"Never mind," snapped Leigh. "Where are they taking her? Come on, we've got to follow them before they do her harm."

HE hooked the space helmet the girl had dropped in his belt and set off toward the jungle. Then Charlie blocked the way, putting his oversized platters against Leigh's chest.

"No go through jungle," he said. "Come night soon."

"Get out of my way," Stan snapped.

"Come night," Charlie repeated worriedly.

"Move!" said Stan.

Charlie clapped his hands, making a sharp, pistol explosion sound.

Stan's muscles grew tense, his hand tightening on the heat gun. He glanced sharply around at the jungle expecting to see dozens of angry natives leap out, surrounding him. Then his mouth relaxed abruptly and he stared foolishly at two balloon-like jelly-fish that floated toward Charlie from over the jungle.

"What the hell is this?" he said.

"We go to Soor caves," Charlie answered excitedly. "Soors not there much in day. Soors no like men; only want women. Steal much Moku women. Kill Moku men."

A moist pair of green tentacles hooked themselves under Leigh's armpits. He felt his flesh crawl over his bones as he stared into the sober, colorless eyes of the weird, air-going fish. In another moment he was gently lifted into the air. Charlie was carried by the second jellyfish.

The floating jelly fish moved with amazing swiftness, being guided by sounds from Charlie's flat hands. Before reaching the ridge of hills jutting above the fetid everglade land, they swung to the left. A few minutes later they were circling over a strangely formed mountain.

"Soor's city," Charlie cried as they hovered above what appeared to be a conical volcano.

The jellyfish dropped with alarming speed, plummeting into the dark abyss for endless minutes. One instant a cry of warning formed upon Stan's lips when he thought the green jellyfish had lost its grip. The next second he had forgotten his fears as they plunged toward a broad, torchlit ledge.

Stan swept the ledge with one glance. At the far end there was a large tunnel opening. A Soor stood guard there, its ugly wings folded against its squat body like twin leathery umbrellas.

"Girl maybe in there," Charlie whispered.

"Okay, follow me," said Stan. He pulled out his heat gun and advanced toward the tunnel.

Suddenly the Soor-guard rushed across the ledge, wings outspread, flapping hideously. Stan halted an instant. He shot from the hip, a sizzling, orange streak of flame.

"Crisped the guy," he grunted at Charlie. "Now where? The hole, eh?"

The native nodded, trembling.

"You stay here," Leigh ordered. "See that our flying protoplasms don't run out on us."

With quickening pulse, Stan plunged into the mysterious underground city of caves and traced his way daringly through the maze of tunnels hewn from the soft, porous planetoid stone.

Walls of jagged black rock were lit by a dim, eldritch green glow that seemed to come from some mysterious element in the rock itself. Leigh's senses sharpened a hundredfold, his nerves standing on end as he penetrated the deserted byways of a strange world.

His uneasiness increased as he went deeper into the eerie caverns. He cursed himself for not having saved Tanya sooner. He'd never find her in this maze. He might be too late. The place was a trap.

Presently, almost before he could stop himself, he stumbled into a large, well lit cavern. He caught his breath sharply and a gasp of sheer astonishment escaped his throat . . . *Directly ahead, seated upon a crude, barbaric throne, was the girl—Tanya Snow!*

Stan grasped the scene in an instant. Tanya was surrounded by the fantastic Soors who were bowing before her,

thumping their heads upon the cavern floor in some weird, savage ritual.

Near the throne, a gigantic bat-man, whose body had been painted hideously, turned from the bowing mob to the girl. As he approached her, the sharp, barb-like stinger protruding from his snout vibrated with an eerie, hissing sound. The bat-man came closer, while Stan stood there, his eyes glued upon the girl.

THE girl was beautiful, breathlessly beautiful, and yet she seemed unaware of her danger. She stared across the cavern, her dark hair framing a smooth oval face of madonnaesque proportions.

Leigh opened his mouth to shout a cry of warning. Suddenly he stopped. She was looking at him, almost staring through him. Then she pointed a bone sceptre at him. The immediate result was a commotion—but not in the manner Stan had expected.

A group of Soors thrashed toward the door, blocking that avenue of escape. Leigh, however, had seen another tunnel behind the throne. Where it went, he did not know, but he was prepared to take chances.

He leaped toward the throne and quickly grasped Tanya's hand.

"Come on," he shouted. "Quick—through the tunnel."

The girl jerked her arm away, staring at him oddly, refusing to move.

Before he was able to sweep her into his arms a savage circle of bat-men closed in on him, their heavy wings flailing madly, their sub-human faces contorted with rage.

Stan lashed out with his fist. It cracked mightily against a Soor. The beast crumbled. Stan reached for his heat gun but before his fingers touched the butt a coil of twisted rope tightened about him. He struggled, kicking vainly, straining to undo his arms. The rope coiled tighter and in a moment he was being lugged from the big chamber.

It was a very befuddled and angry Stan Leigh who tossed around in the narrow cave-prison a few minutes after the six Soors had dumped him there. If anyone had ever told him that Leigh was scheduled to lose a fight to a bunch of unarmed savages, he would have laughed.

But now he couldn't . . . That girl burned in his mind; an indelible picture of Tanya Snow, seated amidst those weird savages.

"Telanews and Spacefotos never got half the lowdown on this batty planetoid," he grumbled. "And the way I feel now, Old Man Harp won't get the other half."

He rolled violently upon the cavern floor, jerking at the twisted ropes that held his arms and legs. The binding grew tighter as he struggled. Finally he relaxed, allowing his mind to become the prey of overwhelming and disturbing thoughts.

"What the devil was Tanya Snow doing up there on the dais?" he asked himself bitterly. He had seen her fight the Soors before they had carried her away. "Now she's on their side. Am I nuts? And where is Egon Snow?"

Leigh groaned, almost as if the bundle of thoughts were too big to cram into his mind at the moment.

Presently he heard a scraping near the door of the prison-cave. Someone removing the stones that blocked the entrance. Stan shifted his position, watching the entrance. A strange feeling of expectancy ran through his body.

"You!" he gasped excitedly, seeing Charlie the Moku's head poke through the opening.

Charlie pressed a flat hand on his mouth, urging silence.

"Hurry," he whispered. He unfas-

tened Stan's hands and legs. "We go pronto, pronto."

Leigh rubbed his wrists to bring back the circulation.

"Say, who's doing the rescuing around here? You or I?"

Charlie stared soberly.

"Pronto," he whispered. "Soors put you here to kill you. Soors kill all men; only want women alive."

"I'm going back to get Tanya," Stan cut in.

"No good," Charlie protested vigorously. "Once Soors get woman, she no good. No want to come."

"She's coming anyway," Stan answered grimly. "Show me where the big cave is, or I'll bust your neck!"

Charlie shook his head anxiously. The sharp glint in Stan's eyes suddenly caused him to change his mind. He slipped from the cave into the tunnel, followed by Stan.

THEY encountered no one along the twisted tunnels and soon came to familiar entrance of the big cavern. Stan shoved the native aside and crept forward cautiously. He still had the Seabold gun which the Soors had not taken upon capturing him.

Suddenly he stood up, abruptly, and entered the cavern. It was empty, save for a lone, crumpled figure lying on the throne. It was Tanya.

"My God!" Stan cried. A wave of fear shook him as he ran toward the girl. "They've killed her."

"She not dead," Charlie interrupted. "Dream-sleep. Soors do it to all women."

Stan lifted the limp body in his arms. The touch of her body, relaxed and yet firm, sent a new sensation coursing through his veins. He held her thus for a moment. Then his nerves tightened and he whirled toward the cave entrance.

"Soors!" Charlie yelled.

A squad of hideous bat-men plunged through the entrance, racing toward the dais amidst a savage bedlam of cries.

"Step on it," Stan snapped. He lifted the unconscious girl to his shoulder and leaped down the rear steps of the dais, plunging into the small tunnel behind the throne. The sound of Charlie's webbed feet flopping along and the angry cries of the bat-men in pursuit crashed in his ears.

The mysterious tunnel narrowed as it coiled through the mountain and soon the sound of pursuit diminished.

"They can't follow us through this," Stan muttered without slowing his pace. "But where the devil does it go?"

His question was soon answered by the appearance of a faint light in the distance. In another moment Stan carried the girl from the cavernous blackness into daylight—the daylight of Planetoid Ten's strange jungles.

"Jumping comets," said Stan. "We're right at the base of the mountain. We'd better push on before they decide to follow us."

"We all right," said Charlie. "Soors no come down in jungle. Wings too wide."

The native gathered a quantity of moist green herbs from the jungle undergrowth and squeezed some of their juice, forcing it between the girl's lips.

"What's that?" Stan questioned.

"Fix her," said Charlie.

The girl's lashes fluttered, warmth came to her cheeks, and she stared at the two men in a bewildered, frightened fashion.

"Where am I? Who—" she whispered hesitantly.

Stan squeezed her hand reassuringly.

"It's all right kid. I'm Stan. Remember?"

The girl smiled wanly.

"Where's my father?" she asked

worriedly.

"You mean that you don't know where he is?" Stan gasped. "How the hell did you get here?"

"I came in my own ship," Tanya answered. "I was in Venus when my dad came back here the second time. He radioed me that he wanted supplies, guns. I'm afraid he's in trouble."

"What did he come back here for?"

The girl shrugged.

"You know dad. He's always been sort of a missionary at heart. He liked to do things for the uncivilized planet natives. That's why he came back here. He said there were some people he wanted to help."

"With guns?" Stan added doubtfully.

"I'm afraid," said Tanya.

"You ought to be! What the devil were you doing on that throne in the bat-men cave?"

The girl shivered involuntarily.

"I don't know," she said. "They brought me to the cave and one of them stung me with that awful stinger. After that I knew what was happening but I couldn't help myself. It was like being hypnotized."

"I don't like it," Stan cut in. "Those bat-men are going to come after you. They didn't put you up on that dais for nothing. We've got to find your father and get off this planetoid."

CHARLIE shook Stan excitedly. He pointed at the rapidly declining sun, then the overgrown jungle of plants and purplish ferns. A strange thing was happening. Tanya and Stan gaped in wide-eyed amazement.

The jungle withered before their very eyes. Life seemed to drain out of the giant ferns and they fell back into the mud-marshes, as if some vast force were causing them to decay. The fetid atmosphere also thinned, seeming to drain away. The transformation came with weird suddenness that caused a tingling sensation of awe to run through Leigh.

"It's colder now," Tanya cried.

Then Stan blinked, unbelievingly. *Charlie was gone!* A moment before the native had been at his side; now he was gone with the strange jungle verdure. He stared at the countless mud holes where a series of air bubbles formed upon the viscid surface.

Something moved there. Something dripping with slime crawled out toward them. Leigh's alert eyes caught the shape of platter hands—It was Charlie!

Dripping with ooze, the native stood on the mud-bank beckoning Stan and Tanya to dive into the flats. "Sleep, night," he called anxiously.

Stan shook his head.

"What the tarnation do you take me for?" he said. "Think I'm a mud turtle?"

A helpless frown crossed the native's none too expressive face. He took a step toward them, then back to the mud hole. He threw his platter hands overhead and dove into the mud.

Both Tanya and Stan stood gaping. Ripples spread across the sluggish surface. The hole where Charlie's body had disappeared slowly filled, leaving an occasional bubble rise to the surface.

"What a place to sleep," Stan gasped. "It's the next thing to hibernating for a night."

Tanya trembled and leaned closer to Stan.

"It gives me the creeps," she said. "Please, we must find my father."

"Buck up, kid," said Stan.

He led the girl along the tortuous route across the now barren, mud crusted terrain. Not far ahead, the dark outline of the hills that Charlie had pointed out earlier in the day, loomed.

When they came to a break in the

hills, a narrow pass with sheer, porous stone bluffs that hung on each like bleak, foreboding curtains, Leigh found it difficult going. His breath came in jerky gasps. His lungs burned as if hot irons had been poked into them.

Then Tanya fainted. Leigh stared at her aghast. Her cheeks and lips were a sickly bluish color.

"Air!" he suddenly gasped. He staggered dizzily, his fingers reaching for the girl's space suit which was packed in a roll at her belt.

Somehow he got her into it. Then he fastened the helmet. A twist of the air inlet ballooned the space-suit.

His head whirled madly with the rush of violent blood. His space-helmet was tangled in his belt. He tore at it frantically while his lungs seemed to expand, to rip every tissue. Then everything went dark and nothing seemed to hurt anymore.

THE shroud of darkness that had enveloped his brain slowly slipped away, one curtain after another. Light and sensations returned by degrees. Then he saw Tanya standing over him, smiling thankfully.

"That was a close call," Tanya spoke through her portable transmitter. "I got your helmet on just in time. It was close for both of us."

"My Lord! What a planetoid!" Stan groaned. "The damn thing must be porous. The air drains into it at night. That's why Charlie went under."

"Look!" Tanya suddenly cried.

Stan's gaze swept in the direction of her pointing finger.

"A plantation house in this god-forsaken world," Stan gasped between breaths.

The strange house was a rambling affair constructed mostly of the planetoid's porous rock. The rear of the house leaned flush against the base of the cliff. Its roof—that was what caused Leigh to gasp again—was fashioned from the hull plates of Snow's dismantled space-ship.

"It's my father's. He's in there!" cried Tanya.

Stan held her back.

"Wait," he warned her. "It might be Snow's—and it might not!"

Stan loosened the gun in his belt and moved toward the house with cat-like strides. He kept well within the moon's shadow. There were no sounds from within, no movements, only the strange uncanny stillness of the planetoid's airless night.

Gripping his gun more tightly, Stan entered the house. Suddenly he turned to Tanya with a look of dismay.

"It's deserted!" he said. "It looks like he never lived here. The termites left a couple of chairs, that's all."

A harsh scraping from the rear of the house caused him to whirl around in time to see a steel door, fastened to the cliff-rock, slowly and mysteriously open. Beyond it there was a bare, rocky room—an air-lock—then another door.

"Looks like an invitation," Stan spoke suspiciously. "Think I'll take it up. How about you, Tanya?"

Tanya pressed closer to him as they stepped cautiously into the air-lock. Suddenly she let out a frightened cry. The outer door had closed behind them and a hissing of air followed.

"Lord Almighty!" Stan gasped as the second door swiftly rolled back.

The first objects to meet his startled gaze were a pile of cooking utensils and an electric stove. Tanya pushed past him excitedly.

"Dad!" she cried happily.

Egon Snow smiled upon his daughter tenderly. He was a big man whose shock of white hair and heavy white

beard gave him a patriarchal bearing. Then he glanced toward Leigh, a look of recognition glowing in his steady eyes.

"You certainly picked yourself a nice summer home," Stan grinned, shaking hands.

"It will do," Snow answered with a nod toward the stone chairs within the cave. "Sit—I'll get you some food. We can talk after."

Stan welcomed the chance to shinny out of his space suit and sit at a well cooked meal. Snow, in the meantime, talked about Planetoid Ten with all the enthusiasm of a missionary-discoverer.

"The planetoid," he explained, "has an odd orbit. It's lopsided. During the day the surface is steaming hot and at night it's frigid; consequently the plant life runs through a complete four-seasonal cycle within the planetoid's day. Spring begins in the morning and winter comes at night."

THE aged Telanews explorer paused, waiting for an expression of surprise to meet his words.

"That's nothing," Stan cut in. "We just got away from the bat-men."

"The Soors—" There was an undertone of anxiety in Snow's voice, something he feared.

"Nice people, eh?" Stan smiled.

"There aren't many of them," said Snow. "A dying race. Somehow they only produce males among them and must make periodic raids on my Moku people for females. They're very dangerous. They have some semi-poisonous sting that enslaves the women."

Tanya gave a sudden gasp.

"Oh, it's not bad, my child," Snow reassured her. "You're safe here. We only have Mokus around the hills here. They're a very mild people, really friendly and intelligent. I'm working among them."

"Those mud puddlers!" Stan said sarcastically.

Snow gave him a hurt look.

"Oh, that," he replied. "Yes, the Mokus hibernated in the mud each night when I first discovered them. The air was down there—you see, they're semi-amphibian . . .

"But I've taught them to build cities in the cliffs. We'll have air-locks and compression pumps. Before long we'll have a self-sufficient civilization. Planetoid Ten is rich in tropical products and the Mokus learn quickly."

Tanya smiled at her father.

"You've always wanted to do this kind of work, haven't you, dad?"

Snow nodded.

"Yes, that's why I returned to Planetoid Ten after delivering my last set of pictures . . . the last I'll ever make."

"Yeah, but you're coming back to Telanews with me," said Leigh. "You've got to prove those pictures were true. And you've got to prove that you're not dead."

"Dead?" said Snow.

"Yeah, dead! That's what the world thinks."

"I wish I'd never taken those pictures," Snow complained.

"So does Old Man Harp. Spacefoto will ruin him," Stan answered drily. "They must have taken night pictures without thinking what might happen here during the day when they made that exposé."

"I've resigned from Telanews," said Snow.

Stan choked back his astonishment.

"Quitting?" he gasped.

Snow nodded seriously.

"The devil you will," Stan cried, leaping to his feet in agitation. "You're going back and prove those films were *bona fide*. There's a million dollar business on the verge of ruin unless you do."

"Let it be ruined," Snow answered

stubbornly. "I'll not go back."

"That's what you think," said Stan. "But I'm taking you back personally, along with a few Mokus. You may be too damn mixed up in your missionary work to know it, but your life is in danger here. And Tanya, too! Those bat-men had a look at her. They're not going to give her up that easily."

Before the sound of his words had died in the cavern he felt a hand snatch the heat gun from his belt. His jaw sagged loosely, surprised, as he turned to face the muzzle of his own gun.

"Tanya! What the—"

The girl's eyes watched him coldly.

"My father doesn't want to return," she said evenly. "Sorry, but that's that."

Leigh looked at Snow. "You going to let her do that?" he snapped.

"I'm afraid so," Snow answered. "I'm sure you won't mind being a free prisoner on Planetoid Ten. I'll see that your ship is dismantled in the morning."

"*Dismantled!*" roared Stan. "Are you crazy?"

EGON Snow smiled wearily, meanwhile motioning Tanya to put down the heat gun.

"I wouldn't attempt to get away if I were you," Snow said with a nod to Leigh. "You can't anyway."

"Who'll stop me?" Stan growled.

"The Mokus—on my orders," said Snow. "But you don't understand . . ."

"Understand, hell!" Stan snapped. "Have you gone nuts enough to lock three of us on this lopsided planetoid for life? And what about Tanya? She is no girl to be lost up here. She belongs to the world."

Tanya straightened her shoulders proudly at Leigh's words.

"I'll do what Dad does," she said coldly.

"But Leigh, you *don't* understand," Snow persisted. "It is best that no one returns. It's best that the world has a false conception of Planetoid Ten. The moment they really discover the truth, this place will be overrun by space-tourists and colonial promotors. Remember Venus?"

"So what?" Stan frowned. "Venus has a fair set of taverns. In fact, it has a pretty good grade of brandy. What more do you want?"

Snow shuddered.

"I don't want that here," he said slowly. "The Mokus are a good-natured, simple people. I want them to live and develop a culture of their own."

"Sure," Leigh ridiculed. "Nice and sober. And the bat-men? I suppose you'll teach them Immelman's and wing-overs. You take my word for it. They're going to make trouble. They've seen Tanya and they'll be back for her."

"The Soors!" Snow shook his head. "They'll die off as long as we can keep the Moku females out of their hands. Tanya brought guns so we could protect ourselves."

"Hmm!" Stan dropped disgustedly upon one of the stone chairs. He knew the argument had come to a dead-end. Snow was right, absolutely right within certain limits. Yet, there was the fact that his company was at the mercy of the Spacefoto crowd . . . Snow just had to come back!

"What a story Snow's return would make," he thought. "The biggest in history."

Stan pictured himself sliding into the New York spaceport with Snow, Tanya and Charlie. Perhaps he'd have a floating jellyfish along, too. The news, of course, would have been shot ahead. Millions of people would be out there to welcome them. Then headlines, extra editions, Telanews, parades and—a

raise . . .

The sound of the air-lock swinging open and a whiff of moist, hot air rushing into the cavern broke the train of wishful thoughts. One of the Moku natives entered, bearing a load of luxuriant fruit upon platter hands.

The native was followed by Charlie the Moku who bowed before Snow, then turned to Leigh, saying, "Me major-domo. Take you see works."

"Go along with him," Snow interrupted. "You're at liberty. Tanya will watch you until I've dismantled the two space-cruisers."

Stan nodded and followed the native from the cavern, through the plantation house to the open air. A sudden, desperate plan had formed in his mind. He hoped that Snow hadn't caught any betraying sign of it upon his face.

The plan was simple. Hadn't Tanya brought guns in her cruiser!

Leigh followed Charlie, feigning interest in the plantation—waiting.

OUTSIDE, the sun had come up, and along with it, the fetid jungle of strange plants and ferns. Leigh kept an alert watch on every movement, every change. Something told him that there was danger, not only in his plan, but danger lurking about, unsuspected danger.

His eye took note of the numerous Moku women working before the plantation, making mats and crude furniture. Many of them were no more than girls. They were tall and willowy, almost beautiful in their own way.

"Come see digging city," Charlie said with the pomp of a born guide.

Stan glanced into the crude vertical shaft, a preliminary tunnel leading to the future Moku underground city. Suddenly a shadow joined his.

It was Tanya. She was looking quite fresh and rested, having had a few hours sleep.

"How do you like your new home?" she chided him.

Stan shot her a disgusted glance.

"Not bad, except for the company," he answered.

"Meaning me?"

"Who else?" Stan replied drily.

"What's wrong with me?"

"Oh, you look all right," said Stan. "In fact, for a while I thought you were all right. I had a crazy idea we might get along pretty well together."

The girl blushed warmly.

"I don't see why we can't," she said. "We're friends. Does that sound strange?"

"Yeah, like another language," Stan answered with sarcasm.

"Stan," the girl went on, "I know it was hard to do what I did to you. It's hard for you to understand. Dad's always wanted something like this. I couldn't spoil it."

"Selfish, eh?" Stan grunted. "You couldn't stop to consider the people who'll lose their jobs when Telanews flops."

He turned away disgustedly.

"Wait, Stan!" Tanya cried, running to his side. "I have thought of them. And I've changed my mind. Here!"

She thrust the heat gun into his hand along with a tin of Telanews negatives. Stan stood stock still, gaping in astonishment.

"I've thought of those people," Tanya said hastily as if she were afraid she might change her mind. "Dad has gone to dismantle your ship. You still have time to stop him and return with your story. That tin contains more proofs which he failed to send back."

Stan fingered the gun, embarrassed. He shoved it into his belt, saying:

"All right. So you're seeing things my way. Come on; we're going. We'll take Charlie, you and your father."

A look of dismay clouded the girl's pretty face.

"But Dad and I aren't going!" she cried.

"You're darn right you're going," Stan grinned. "I've got a job to do. Snow is going back to prove that he's alive and I'm not leaving you stay here with those bat-men on the loose."

"But there are pictures of Dad in the film."

"Nuts!" said Stan. "I want him in the flesh."

Tanya's lips quivered.

"You can't make us go," she cried, tears welling in her eyes.

"So sorry," said Stan. "I'm not making you go back—the heat gun is."

EGON SNOW and a score of Moku natives had just reached the space-cruisers when Stan Leigh, Tanya and Charlie the Moku came into view.

"Okay, Snow!" Stan shouted. "Drop your tools and get in. We're going to pay New York a visit."

Snow whirled, staring at Leigh and at the Seabold gun in his hand. His bearded jaw relaxed, amazed.

"Y-y-you can't do it, Leigh," he pleaded. "We don't want to go back. I tell you, we don't!"

"Get in," said Stan. "There are more people concerned in this than you."

"Tanya—" Snow began.

"Leave her out of it," snapped Stan.

Snow shrugged helplessly and climbed into the space-ship.

"All right, Tanya!" said Stan.

Abruptly, he sucked his breath in. Something sharp pressed into his back—a knife.

"Drop that gun," Tanya cried with a note of triumph in her voice.

"Why you little—"

The knife cut into his flesh dangerously. Leigh let the gun drop from his fingers and the girl caught it as it fell.

"Dad, you stay out here," Tanya ordered her father. "Stan, get in the compartment there," she added, indicating an empty storage chamber within the cruiser.

Stan controlled his anger and stepped in.

"What's the gag?" he demanded as the girl followed him and closed the door.

Tanya eyed him, her body tense and nervous. The ice around the edges of her voice melted as she spoke.

"Stan," she said. "I'm giving you a chance again. I know you've got a job to do. I know you're stubborn. But why don't you give it up and stay here with Dad and me?"

Stan leaned back against the steel compartment wall, a curious look glowing in his eyes.

"Don't you see what I'm offering you?" Tanya's voice became a soft whisper. "Don't you see that I'm offering you—"

Without a word, Stan swept her into his arms. He pressed all the fire in his lips against hers. For what seemed to be a fraction of eternity, her small body trembled against his. Then she pushed him away.

"You're staying,' she cried happily.

A troubled frown knitted Stan's brows. He shook his head slowly.

"No, kid. I've got to get back there," he glanced at the gun she still held. "I must get back, if you'll only put that toaster down.

She dropped the gun to the floor. Stan took it.

"Please, Stan."

For an instant he smiled at her, then he took her head in his hands, tenderly.

"I'm in love with you, Tanya," he spoke with feeling. "But I signed up for this job and I never go back on my word. Don't worry though. I'll go back alone. I'll straighten this thing

up and get the Intergovernment Council to declare Planetoid Ten a zoned area so the commercial scavengers won't overrun it . . . Then I'll be back for you."

Their eyes met for a long moment. Stan felt his heart being torn apart, seeing the girl's lips tremble like that.

"I don't want you that way," she cried.

Then she ran from the compartment. Leigh leaped after her with an exclamation upon his lips, a mad desire to call her back, to say that he'd stay. But he stopped abruptly. He saw her outside, talking with her father and Charlie.

Presently Tanya turned, and without looking back upon the cruiser, ran toward the matted fern jungle.

"There goes love," Stan muttered grimly as he hesitated at the cruiser door before turning his back on the scene. "Maybe I'm the fool."

Suddenly a scream caused him to whirl around. At the same instant the air filled with the ominous sound of gigantic bat wings.

"My God!" Stan leaped from the cruiser.

Above, four weird bat-men wheeled clumsily over the cruiser, their hideous faces plainly visible. They swooped down in formation, wings outstretched, whistling shrilly, clawed hands reaching forward.

"Tanya, down!" Stan shouted hoarsely.

THE girl stood paralyzed, knowing not whether to run toward her father or Stan. Suddenly she turned toward Stan, her frightened eyes pleading.

Stan reached the girl's side just as the first Soor reached the bottom of its dizzy, diving curve. Stan felt the impact of collision—his head and the stubby feet of the monster. The beast let out an angry snarl.

Stan felt as if his head were rolling off through a heaven of blazing stars. It seemed to bang into a comet or two along the way.

"Stan! Stan!" Tanya screamed.

The bat-man swung overhead again and was already returning in a swift, devastating dive. The distance was too short for effective use of the heat gun. Stan grabbed a soft chunk of wood and rose to meet the Soor.

Swoosh! A gulf of wind swirled about his head. Leathery wings struck slashing blows. With all his might, Stan swung the club, shattering it against the bat-man's flank. The beast wobbled on the up-flight, then abruptly dropped to the earth out of the battle.

"Tie him up!" Stan shouted at Egon Snow.

"Stan -"

Leigh's blood suddenly chilled at the terrified cry from Tanya. Two ugly creatures were dragging her into the air. They had her aloft and out of reach before he could help her.

Meanwhile a fourth creature descended in a long spiral, diving for another assault. Stan measured the distance. For a moment he took his agonized eyes off of Tanya as a wild, desperate idea suddenly flashed into his mind.

He counted the seconds.

"Now, dammit," he bellowed as the flapping wings slapped at his head with terrific force. He leaped with the suddenness of unsprung steel.

His right hand clutched the bat-creature's blunt leg in a desperate grip. For a second there was a wild thrashing of wings as the snarling Soor dragged its human burden across the rough ground. Then, with a tremendous upsurge, both Stan and the beast shot into the air.

The bat creature struggled helplessly, trying to dislodge the iron fisted human being clinging to its leg. At the same time it fought for more altitude.

Stan caught a glimpse of the ground reeling fifty feet below. He heard Snow shouting some unintelligible warning. He shuddered and hung on tighter. The fingers of his free hand twisted in the matted hair higher upon the body of the bat-man and with almost superhuman strength, Stan pulled himself into position, getting both arms around the creature's middle.

"Now, sweet chariot, make tracks," he hissed.

Both arms squeezed and the beast let out an agonized snarl that brought a grim smile to Leigh's lips. The plan was working! The bat-man, frightened by the burden upon its back, headed off toward the volcanic mountain where Tanya had been carried.

Beads of sweat stood out on Stan's brow as the beast made for the volcano mouth and dropped into the dark interior . . . sixty feet . . . forty . . . thirty . . . twenty feet . . . The ledge appeared. Stan relaxed his grip slightly. Then both man and beast crashed heavily.

Stan leaped aside quickly, covering the Soor with his heat gun. He squeezed the trigger.

"That ends your flying days," he growled.

Then turning to the entrance of the tunnel that led to the weird underground caverns, Stan did a strange thing. After entering the tunnel, he carefully aimed the Seabold gun at the side wall of the entrance. Sharp daggers of flame bored into the porous rock until the stone began crumbling. With a grinding roar, rock piled into the tunnel, sealing the entrance behind Stan.

"First time I ever burned a bridge after me," he muttered grimly as he set out along the slanting, eldritch lit maze of subterranean passages.

Again his flesh tingled with an eerie sensation, a feeling of clammy oppression, of hidden menace. The greenish glow within the tunnels caused strange shapes to suddenly dance across the walls.

Presently he found the cave where he had been held captive. A moment later he crept toward the large cavern. There his heart jumped a beat at the sounds that clashed upon his ears—savage, inhuman, lustful cries issuing from the monstrous throats of the Soors gathered in the great cavern.

Stan's eyes flashed upon the milling mob of bat-creatures in horror. A blind rage shook his body at the sight of the ugly bat-man who had seized the girl in his brutal, pulsating arms.

They were fighting over her!

HORRIBLE snarls echoed in the cavern. Clawed hands snatched at the petrified girl and the bat-man who held her. The bat-man held his prize and bared his jagged teeth at the others. The circle closed in, then Stan went into action . . .

"You lugheads!" he roared.

Soors on the outer fringe of the mob turned at the sound of his voice. The disturbance registered upon those farther in. No growl of savage warning ever sounded more hair-raising than the chilling cry emitted by the bat-men as they recognized Stan.

Three Soors lunged at him, wings flapping angrily, faces contorted into bestial snarls. Stan waited, let them converge on him, then he let go with the full blast of the Seabold gun. The stench of burning flesh mingled with the acrid yellow smoke and horrible shrieks of mutilated beasts.

The uproar that followed turned into a savage dogfight. Soors tore at each

other, fought for the girl, charged at Stan.

"Get out of my way," Stan roared as he blasted his way through the milling sea of angrily beating wings, grasping arms and struggling bodies. The heat gun turned the cavern into a sudden hell, mowing the Soors down in waves.

Suddenly Stan turned the gun in his hand, swinging the butt-end, crashing it into skulls, making a savage, hard-fought trail to the center of the cavern. His fist crashed into a Soor who lunged at him. Again the gun cracked a skull to bloody pulp.

The intense orange flame from the heat gun and the violent onslaught of the strange man were too much for the bat-men. Taken by surprise, they fought among themselves to get out of the deadly range of the gun.

Stan shook the hair out of his eyes and bore down on the bat-man who held Tanya. The beast turned with a furious snarl, jabbing its mind-paralyzing stinger at Stan.

Stan ducked aside and with a swift movement closed in, smashing the butt of his gun in the Soor's face. The beast recoiled an instant, then leaped forward with a savage growl. Smash! Stan's fist plowed into the *thing's* stomach. The bat-man choked for breath. Stan brought the butt of his gun down heavily and there was the sound of cracking skull bones.

"Tanya!" Stan yelled. He leaped over the dead bat-man, swept the girl up in his arms and raced toward the tunnel behind the throne. A host of savage cries followed him.

"Wait a minute," said Stan as he reached the tunnel. "Go up ahead, Tanya, I've a job to finish here."

He backed into the tunnel, covering pursuit with his Seabold gun. When he had cleared the entrance he turned the blast of his gun on the side walls.

"Here goes," he shouted triumphantly.

The sound of his voice was swallowed up. The tunnel flared with an orange light and heat as the rocky ceiling ripped open and crashed down with a ear-splitting roar that was like a vengeful mountain slide. Dust ballooned through the narrow dark way, shrouding everything with its choking thickness.

On the far side of the cave-in, within the great cavern, countless Soors gaped, knowing instinctively that death had come. Dozens of them fled in panic only to find that both entrances of their subterranean world were sealed. Instinctively their simian brains gave way to fear, animal fear of death in a trap.

Meanwhile Stan and Tanya ran through the last few hundred feet of the tunnel. Their clothes had been torn, their faces bruised and their bodies covered with dust by the thunderous cave-in.

As they came into the open air, Stan grinned at the girl.

"Well, we made it so the Mokus won't ever be bothered again," he said with an air of triumph.

"So we won't ever be bothered," said Tanya. "I knew you'd do it, Stan. I knew you'd change your mind and stay."

A troubled look crossed Stan's face. He took the girl in his arms, saying:

"Listen, kid. I would have died for you if I had had to. I mean it. But I still have a contract to fill. I'm going, but I want you to take me when I come back."

"Stan—" Tanya's eyes pleaded.

STAN LEIGH tossed an uninterested glance at the shapely legs of the blond secretary in the outer office of the Telanews Corporation and pushed his way into William Harp's office.

Harp glanced up, more owlish than ever when the door slammed.

"Well, Gees, Leigh old boy," he growled jovially. "What can I do for you? Give you a job?"

Stan halted, amazed. Why wasn't Harp jumping all over him, pumping him for news of Snow. Quickly he gained control of himself.

"I'm giving you a job," he answered drily. "I found Snow—alive!"

"You what?" Harp gasped. His fat face suddenly turned pale.

"Have a bicarbonate," Stan grinned. "The blasted old Telanews Corporation is saved. And who did it? You're little white haired boy, Stan Leigh."

"That's impossible!" Harp muttered.

"Nothing is impossible," said Stan. "We've got the Spacefoto crowd in a corner. Tomorrow we get enough pictures out to blast them off the screen. Egon Snow's pictures were *bona fide*. I saw the stuff. In fact, I've got new pictures of Snow—and something better than pictures."

Stan beamed upon his boss. He was filled with the excitement of the occasion. This was a story. The biggest story in history.

"A-a-are you s-s-ure?" Harp stuttered weakly.

Stan smiled triumphantly.

"Sure! Why man, I've got one of those flying bat-men from Planetoid Ten cooped up in my space-cruiser. We captured it alive. Lord, man! We'll put in on exhibit. What more do you want?"

Suddenly, to Leigh's complete astonishment, his boss keeled over, out of his chair in a dead faint.

"Here, swallow deep," Stan forced a glass of brandy down the fat man's throat.

Harp blinked his eyes and choked spasmodically.

"You can't bring that stuff back here," he ranted after a moment. "I don't want any proof. Go tell Snow that he's got to stay dead. I'll pay him well."

Stan stared at the tubby little man in alarm.

"What do you mean?" he gasped. "Stay dead?"

"Just that," Harp answered. "Take Snow away. He must remain dead. No one must ever see him again."

"Calm yourself," Stan said, patting his boss soothingly. "I realize it was tough for you, hanging on here with all the trouble Telanews was in. But don't let it get you down. We've got the stuff now. The company is saved."

Harp grabbed the tin of films Stan had put on his desk. He ripped the lid away and shook the films out into his wastebasket.

"Hey! Are you nuts?" Stan roared.

Abruptly, Harp touched a cigar lighter to the negatives.

"Cut that!" Stan cried. He twisted the fat man's arm in an iron grip. "What the hell has happened to you? Those films are worth a million bucks."

Harp pushed him away and calmed down somewhat. "Listen, Leigh," he said. "I'm going to shock you. Maybe Snow's pictures are *bona fide*. Maybe there are jungles on Planetoid Ten and Snow is alive there. Maybe you did bring back a flying man. . . . Now listen, you've got to put that thing back where you got it. And we've got to destroy all the proof."

LEIGH'S jaw sagged. The muscles crumbled out of his legs and he swayed dizzily. He felt as if the world had been knocked from under him. He shook his head to make sure he was hearing right.

"After you left for the planetoid," Harp continued, "Spacefoto forced us to merge with them. It's one big com-

pany now. In the meantime, Telanews issued a public apology admitting that our pictures of Planetoid Ten were a hoax made in our own studios. We also issued a statement that Snow had died before the pictures were made. He had died doing some missionary work. The public likes that. So you see, we must let the public forget all about Planetoid Ten."

Leigh suddenly grabbed the little man by the collar, shaking him like a sack of wheat.

"What are you doing?" he snapped. "Framing the public?"

Harp gulped with difficulty. He shook with fright beneath Stan's angry glare. "No, we're not framing," he mumbled. "We thought it best not to cause a controversy . . . You need not take it so hard, Leigh. I'll get you a good job with the new company and we'll make Snow perfectly comfortable as long as he doesn't attempt to return to Earth."

"Thanks," Stan snapped sarcastically. "Here's what I think of your job!"

He seized the pudgy man's face in his hand, giving it a hefty shove backward. Harp shrieked, tripped over his swivel chair and crashed into the wall.

"Leigh -" he pleaded. "You're not going to expose this thing yourself, are you?"

"What about that contract?" said Stan.

"I'll make it good. How about a hundred thousand dollars?" Harp pleaded. He opened his check book and began writing.

"That's chicken feed," Stan said ironically.

"A quarter of a million?"

Stan shrugged.

"You won't expose this thing then?" Harp looked up worriedly.

Stan Leigh speared the disheveled figure of his boss with a look of contempt as he took the check and stuffed it in his pocket.

"That's your worry," he grinned. "Right now I'm off to buy supplies for Old Man Snow and maybe a ring. Then I'm heading back for Planetoid Ten and if I ever catch one of your cameramen scouting around there, I'll break his head open. Tanya and I don't want company."

(Continued from page 6)

IN our December issue we told you about that amazing team of bowlers that carries the banner of AMAZING STORIES in league competition up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The boys were in first place then, and by golly, they are still hanging grimly onto that position, leading by two full games over the second place team, and three over the third place team.

Says Henry Gade, who has a story in this issue, "We've eliminated everybody else, and if we can beat the second and third place teams, we'll bring that cup down and smack it on your desk where all the fans can see it when they come in. Just to prove we can do something else besides write!"

Well, boys, we'll be expecting that cup, and maybe next year you'll be knocking 'em over in the ABC! It's amazing!

Incidentally, if this seems out of season to you, remember this issue is being made up the first two weeks in April, and bowling doesn't wind up until early May, dear reader.

NO doubt you've noticed that in the past few months we've been inserting interesting little fillers at the ends of stories rather than filling out with stars and so on It's little things like this that startle your editor; because these little features have caused many of you to write letters of commendation. We're glad to see you like 'em.

THE other day we got a letter from Arthur T. Harris, telling us he'd got his notice from his draft board. This is rather bad news, because it almost certainly means our newest addition to the AMAZING STORIES family will be torn from us. Wow, is he healthy!

HERE'S one the patent-medicine boys missed. In certain sections of Persia today it is still customary for the presiding priest at a funeral to pass out small sponges to the mourners gathered for the burial ceremony. Throughout the rites the mourners mop the tears from their eyes with these sponges, and when the ceremony is finished, turn them over to the priest. Wringing the sponges, the priest bottles the tears in small containers where they are kept as remedies for certain chronic physical ailments.

ONE of our "experts" on odd facts sends in the following bit.

"One sure way to invite a hangover is to inhale pure gasoline fumes."

You said it, my dear odd-factor! Ever hear of monoxide gas? Well, in spite of the apparent ludicrousness of this bit, there's a lot behind it that might prove interesting. According to Dr. A. C. Cornsweet, psycho-physiologist of the University of North Carolina, inhalation of either gasoline or alcohol vapors produces the same giddy results as liquor. The inference here is that some of our authors haven't been so sappy after all in describing the "gas-bar" of the future where you get happy by merely breathing the atmosphere in the place (cover charge, of course). Dr. Cornsweet proved his point by personal experiment, which leads us to fervently hope he doesn't go too far and try drinking the gasoline!

JUST when the Army is getting used to motorized divisions, along comes a gadget to make marching more comfortable. It's a waterproof, transparent sock made of thin pliofilm. Fitted over the stockinged foot, pliofilm helps to keep cold and dampness from penetrating through shoe or boot. Well, come to think of it, it's just as cold riding, so bring on the motors!

FLASH! The human body develops an immunity when subjected to repeated electrical shocks! But whoa, you murderers, hoping to cheat death in the chair, don't build up any hopes. Here's the facts about that new discovery. Experiments recently conducted at the University of California Medical school show that the human body becomes immune to electrical shock but only to a certain degree. The extent of the shock, from 20 to 75 volts. Amperage was increased from 1/1000, the lowest which can be felt, up to 1/50 of an ampere, and this only in one case. The average subject could stand no more than 3/200 of an ampere.

DO you remember Don Wilcox's yarn, "Battering Rams of Space"? In that story space ships left a trail of gas behind them for hundreds of miles, and then ignited it, to the destruction of the area over which it floated.

Well, that's not an amazing story any more; it's a fact. Both German and English chemists have developed a gas which spreads over vast areas, and then, after a certain conditioning which involves saturation to a certain point with the normal moisture of the atmosphere, ignites spontaneously in a terrific holocaust.

Rocket Raid on New York

Space ships—or in this case Hitler's bombers—could lay this gas over a city, depart, and since it is odorless and colorless, be back at their bases before the disaster would strike.

Why hasn't Hitler done it in his all out blitz of cities like Coventry? Well, that's easy; the British have the gas too, and although they are not brutal enough to use it, they would certainly retaliate when the initiative is taken.

Think it over—you wouldn't try it either unless you felt sure it would be a complete knock out and there'd be no retaliation.

Aside from this, score one for Wilcox. He's beaten the warlords to the punch once again!

NEWEST "sensation" invention of the age!—the flax-gin, or decorticator. Following in the shadow of Eli Whitney, who invented the cotton gin, come O. C. Falkovitch and Dan Smith with a process which may revolutionize and revive the flax industry. After five years experimentation at Georgia Tech, they invented the decorticator to remove the wood from flax fibre.

This machine then chops the fibre in uniform lengths, so that it can be spun with machinery now designed for cotton mills. With their process in final stages of development, the inventors expect to eliminate the tedious "rotting" process, in which flax straw is soaked in water until the woody portion is decomposed.

BEFORE we forget, don't miss the new "Carson of Venus" story, "Goddess of Fire," by Edgar Rice Burroughs in the July issue of *Fantastic Adventures*. If you enjoy the John Carter stories, you'll like these too.

An added point of interest is the appearance in the same issue of Ralph Milne Farley, who has paced Burroughs for many years. *Rap*

NO MAN'S LAND

Lawless pirates shared their outlaw world until interplanetary war broke out. Then old hatreds flared anew.

IN SPACE

by LEIGH BRACKETT

Up through the trapdoor came the faceless monster. A scream —and Dana's gun roared

THE angry clamor rang through the narrow, stifling streets. In his headquarters, which were roofless and brick-walled like all the houses in the outlaw town of Sark, Geoffrey Dana heard it as it swelled and surged closer.

His dark, satanically pointed face hardened, his light eyes narrowed and grew colder still.

Loren the Venusian, jerked aside the fibre matting at the doorway. Heavy, acrid ground vapors sucked in around his feet. Dana caught the added grimness in his bitter young face, the veiled defiance in his blue eyes.

"More trouble?" asked Dana. Beyond the Venusian he could see men crowding around his doorway, silent and ill at ease now that they were here.

Loren nodded his wheat-straw head. Two men came past him with a stretcher, and Dana rose, tall and deceptively slender in his white spun-glass coverall. The darkness of the asteroid's night seemed to pour in with the bitter air.

Dana knew what he was going to see before he looked. In the last seven days five of his men had been brought to him this way. Six more had vanished. And his little kingdom of wolves, already sullen and restless because the Earth-Venus war had knocked their looting into a cocked hat, were getting ugly about it.

"Thompson the Earthman," said Dana softly, his steel-grey head bent. The corpse was big and powerful. Yet

it had a curiously pale fragility, a transparency.

"Bled empty, like the others," said Loren. "Dana, the men . . ."

"Ah, yes. The men." Dana went to the doorway, staring out over the grumbling, uneasy crowd. "Well," he snapped. "What do you want?"

"You know what we want!" A big Venusian swamplander, condemned for piracy on three worlds, shouted it. "Where are our men going? What kills them? And what are you doing about it?"

"If you don't like what I'm doing about it," said Dana silkily, "you can always leave Sark."

Well hidden in the back, someone, a Martian by his accent, yelled, "You can't get out of it that way, Dana!"

"No," growled the Venusian pirate. "You know damn well this asteroid is the only place in the System our hides are safe. But we've got a right . . ."

"A right!" The lamplight from his table cut sharp planes on Dana's pointed face, laid black shadows in the scars, of living as much as of battle, about his thin mouth and cold grey eyes.

"You bleat about protection," he said. "Who gives it to you? Who found this asteroid beyond Interplanetary Law? Who built this city, where you can run to cover? I've saved all your necks, and don't forget it."

A mutter of assent ran through the crowd. Dana took his advantage.

"I know this war is making things tough. Blockades and space-torpedoes are too much competition for good piracy. The big-shots are staying close to home, so there's no kidnapping, and there's damned little trading in valuables even on Mars. You know how my secret service works. The minute there's anything stirring anywhere, you'll know about it. In the meantime . . ."

"We wait," said the Venusian, and spat. "Blasted Earthmen! If they hadn't been so stubborn, we'd have fat cargo ships . . ."

"Earthmen!" an angry voice cried. "If you bloody insolent Venusians hadn't wanted so much . . ."

MEN began to shout, dropping from *lingua franca* into their own tongues. Groups milled, split, formed into factions. Fists were doubled, and a few knives came out. Dana forbade guns.

"Stop it!" Dana roared. "Stop it, I say!" His voice softened, but it carried to the last man in the crowd.

"Listen, all of you. You're not Martians, or Venusians, or Earthmen any longer. Get that, and remember it. Your worlds have kicked you out. Forget them, because they're gone.

"I've banned war news. The first man who listens to it, the first man who starts trouble over the war, gets a poisoned needle in his neck. Sark is my world. I built it, and I'll run it.

"Hear that, you scum? We have no nationality. We're gone geese here on Sark, with no law, no hope, and no god but me!"

He let it sink in, watching them with cynical amusement. Then he turned quietly to Loren.

"Where did you find the body?"

"Out by No Man's Land," returned the Venusian sullenly.

"Oh," said Dana, and smiled like a wolf. To the men he said, "Go and get armed. Form into posses and fan out to cover the whole circle of the town. I'll give you action, if that's what you want."

They went. Dana turned inside, reaching down his heavy needle-guns, loaded with deadly poison instead of the harmless anaesthetic he allowed his men.

Loren the Venusian stood waiting beside the stretcher, his flat, drilled shoulders stubborn. The bearers had gone. Dana, settling the guns on his lean hips, studied the corpse.

Like the five other bodies brought to him in the last seven days, Thompson the Earthman had a hole in his throat. A neat, clean hole whose edges were white as though with compression. His body was drained of blood.

Bending closer, Dana caught a faint pungency mingling with the acid reek of the air. That, too, had been on the five other bodies. It had a nagging familiarity.

He shook his steel-grey head impatiently, and looked up at Loren.

"I'm waiting," he said.

Loren looked steadily over Dana's shoulder.

"Thompson and Neta the Venusian had a quarrel in one of the dives," he said. "They went out to No Man's Land to settle it."

"And," continued Dana evenly, "when you followed to back up your countryman, you found Thompson dead. Where's Neta?"

"Gone."

Dana nodded.

"Six dead, seven vanished. You forgot, didn't you, Loren?"

Rebellious blue eyes suddenly met Dana's.

"Forgot what?"

"That the outskirts of town are forbidden after dark, until we clear up this mystery. What was the fight about, Loren?"

The Venusian's eyes didn't flicker, and his mouth set. Dana's lean fingers tightened over his gun-butts, but he didn't draw. Then someone moved in the shadows by the door, and a voice said,

"He won't tell you, Dana."

Daddy Gibbs came into the circle of light, a little unsteady on his feet, as always. Frowsy white hair straggled into faded blue eyes that had, at times, an almost childlike clarity.

Yet Daddy Gibbs, in his heyday, had looted thirty-one of the proudest liners in space in one year.

DANA scowled. He was in no mood to fool with the old man now.

"I don't have to be told, Daddy," he snapped, and stepped closer to Loren. "Someone's been listening to war news," he said silkily. "It was the war, wasn't it, Loren?"

"Yes, damn it!" The young Venusian's space-burned face was suddenly ablaze. "Venus is at war. I can't help caring! Neither could you, an Earthman, if you were a man instead of a damned cold-blooded snake!"

The knotted veins stood out on Dana's forehead, but he said quietly,

"You're getting away with it this time. There's trouble brewing here, and I need every man I can trust. I know just how far I can trust you. I know you were cashiered from the Venusian Space Fleet, and I know why.

"You needn't jump. No man lands on Sark unless I know his background. And my secret service has ways of finding out.

"So I'm letting you go, this time. But not again, Loren. Remember that. Not again."

He hadn't noticed Daddy Gibbs heading for the televisor. Now it blared sharply.

" . . . struck again. The Venusian forces were driven back with heavy losses, but not before Terran cities had suffered from long range bombing. Retaliation . . ."

Geoffrey Dana said with dangerous calm,

"Shut it off, Daddy."

But Gibbs, urged on by a chronic

overdose of *tequin*, was leaning against the table, weeping.

"Earth," he muttered. "Beautiful green Earth."

"Mars," blared the announcer, "following her traditional policy, is remaining neutral . . ."

"Until she sees which side is winning," snapped Dana. "Shut it off, you drunken fool!"

The announcer went on unperturbed.

"So far Earth is holding her own. Military experts give her an even chance, provided Mars does not actively ally herself with Venus. However, many neutral observers believe this is only a matter of time, since Mars has a high stake in Venusian water."

"Earth," moaned Daddy Gibbs. "Why did I ever leave her?"

Dana's hand choked the announcer off in mid-sentence. Fighting down a black fury which surprised even him, he whispered,

"If you weren't a drunken old man, Daddy, you'd be dead. Ordinarily I can put up with your baiting. But not now."

"All right, Dana." Daddy Gibbs hiccupped and wiped his nose on a dirty shirtsleeve. "If you hate Earth so much . . ."

"Hate Earth!" roared Dana. "I don't give a damn for Earth, except that this war is making trouble for me! Come on, Loren. We can get out there before those drunken louts get organized."

Daddy Gibbs said, very clearly and steadily,

"You're a liar."

The sheer effrontery of it stopped Dana. He stared at Daddy.

"You must be very drunk," he said.

Daddy laughed, looking like an ancient, mischievous child.

"I am. *In vino, veritas.* I've found you out, Dana. You're still an Earthling. Just like Loren's a Venusian. If you weren't, you wouldn't get so mad at me."

The black fury welled up in Dana, brought the blood hot and blinding back of his cold eyes. It was as though Daddy tried to bind him to something, bridle the freedom that had been the cynical watchword of his life.

His lean hand closed cruelly on the neck of Daddy's dirty shirt.

"I have forgotten Earth," he said, so low and quiet that Loren, watching hawk-like from the doorway, shivered. "And if you want to live, Daddy, you'd better forget, too."

He dropped the old man and strode out, leaving Loren to follow.

CHAPTER II

The Beast

GEOFFREY DANA had good control of himself. Following Loren's gesture, running at an easy lope, his rage was quickly downed.

He had a certain affection for Daddy Gibbs, just as he had for Loren. They were different from the usual mob that inhabited his kingdom. He couldn't break them as he could the others. They'd die, but they wouldn't bend.

For that reason, it was perfectly possible that he might have to kill Loren. Unless he could forget Venus and the war, the boy was going to be an impulsive and rebellious trouble-maker. He'd done a crazy, sentimental thing and been exiled for it, but he still loved his world, and longed to be fighting for it.

Dana knew his polyglot wolves, and he was going to have peace on Sark if he had to kill to get it.

Shrugging that aside, Dana put all his attention on the deadly, puzzling thing that threatened his kingdom.

Seven of his men had vanished without a trace from these black streets, during the hours when the people of Sark took advantage of the relative coolness to pleasure themselves in the dives.

Fights and killings were no unusual things on Sark. The corrosive pools of No Man's Land had taken many a body. But seven in one week, coupled with the six dead men, made natural causes impossible.

Sweat beaded his face, and the taste of it on his lips was bitter. The sluggish south-polar breeze whispered through the roofless houses, keeping them comparatively free of fumes, but here in the streets the acid reek was choking.

Loren coughed and swore, and Dana grinned.

"Don't be too hard on the climate," he said. "It's what keeps anyone else from prospecting, colonizing, or claiming. It keeps us safe from Interplanetary Law, my boy."

Loren grunted. They were well into the outskirts now, and the sound of their running steps had an empty ring.

"What's behind all this, Dana?" demanded the Venusian.

"I don't know." Dana's satanic face darkened. "But by the gods of space, I'll find out. And when I do, someone will drown in the Ashi Geyser!"

He meant it, cruelly, and Loren shot him a quick glance.

"Were you born without a heart?" he asked quietly.

Dana spoke without stopping, his cold grey eyes intent on the deserted houses.

"The heart, as Voltaire once said, is a muscle. Sentiment got you kicked out of the Fleet—you should have let your brother take his own rap. Learn your lesson, Loren. Only fools are soft."

He didn't bother to see how his advice was taken. The last crumbling houses of the town showed No Man's Land through their broken ranks, and Dana's right-hand gun came out of its holster.

"Is this where you found Thompson?"

Loren's wheat-straw head nodded in the starshine.

"Dana!" he said suddenly. "Could it be Jordan Andrews?"

DANA followed Loren's half-seen gesture. Beyond the houses lay Sark's equatorial belt, the barren waste that gave it its Martian name—Bitter. Pitted with sullen, fuming pools and geyser basins, hung with choking vapor, it was the outlet for the corrosive flux that filled the half-hollow worldlet, boiling up in deadly fury from the furnace core.

Looming on a rise of higher ground in the heart of No Man's Land, the tight grey citadel of the Andrews Chemical Works thumbed its nose at Dana's kingdom. Its smug righteousness was a sore point with Dana's men, but Dana, the realist, had suffered it to exist.

It was nothing to him if Jordan Andrews wanted to sink every last Universal Credit he owned into building that chemical plant, to try, by tapping one of the asteroid's vast underground lakes of acid, to recoup his broken fortune.

He had let Andrews build it without disturbing the armed ship that had protected him. He left unmolested the freighters that called thrice yearly to leave supplies and pick up cargo.

Sark was unclaimed, beyond Interplanetary Law. Dana well knew that the Interplanetary Control would give its soul for an excuse to move in on Sark and do away with his kingdom.

An act of violence against Jordan Andrews might conceivably give them

a pretext. Dana wasn't giving it. And presently, he thought, Andrews would fail and go home.

Now Geoffrey Dana shook his head.

"Andrews has nothing to do with this. What would he want with seven of my black sheep? And the dead men, with all their blood sucked out?" An involuntary shiver touched him.

"No, it isn't Andrews. It's something—queer. Those men were strong and tough, yet they died without a struggle."

He tensed sharply, iron-grey head erect.

"Listen!"

Across the uneasy silence of No Man's Land came the muffled crack of heavy needle guns in action.

"Andrews!" Loren exclaimed. "What in hell . . ."

Dana's lean cheeks creased in a wolfish smile. There were six men out there; Andrews and five assistants, cooped up in their air-conditioned fortress.

"Probably," he said softly, "their own purity became unbearable. All right, let's get busy. Don't get too far away from me, show your light as little as possible, and be careful."

Loren nodded and moved away. Dana permitted himself a puzzled scowl in Andrew's direction. The firing had grown ragged. Abruptly it stopped.

Dana shrugged and went on.

He would have had no warning at all, but for the brick that fell beside him from the top of a crumbling wall. Leaping away, he had just time to see a vast unhuman shape rise against the stars and hurtle down upon him.

HIS gun barked once before an arm like a python whipped about his body and pinned his elbow to his side. Lashing out savagely with his left against a bulk that glimmered ghostly white, Dana felt thick soft hair under his knuckles, and beneath that an armor of iron muscle.

His needles had either failed to penetrate the thick coat, or were harmless to this nameless creature. The sickness of futility came to Dana as he felt the impact of sheer size, the vast unhurried strength of the thing.

And then he caught the odor—the peculiar, pungent smell that had clung to the six corpses.

"My God!" he whispered. "This is it!"

Again memory stirred, urgently, but the arm around his body was slowly crushing the air from his lungs. Drawn close against a tremendous chest, smothered by soft fur, Dana bent his lean body and clawed out blindly with his free hand.

He had no leverage for striking. Instead, his fingers found a small round head, groped . . .

Something in him contracted with a chill stab of horror.

On that blank, round ball there was nothing—no ears, no eyes, no nose. Nothing but a three-sided puckering in the center of the front surface that drew open with a suggestion of razor fangs beneath soft bare flesh, and nuzzled his groping palm in a sucking motion, like an unclean kiss.

He cried out hoarsely and wrenched away, but the strength of the thing was incredible. A second arm wrapped him, held him closer, pressed him into the pungent mat of fur.

As though activated by special nerves, the fur puffed out like a cat's tail, enveloping his face, closing mouth and nose and eyes. The pungent smell grew stronger.

Dana fought with silent viciousness. He was weakening. Was he going to find out where the vanished men went? Or would Loren find him, drained dry,

with a hole in his throat?

Most of all, what was this horror, and how had it got to Sark? There was no native life here save moss and scaly lizards.

His lungs burned, his temples throbbed, his crushed ribs stabbed with pain. Then the constricting arms loosened sharply, forcing breath into him. The warm, heavy scent of the creature went deep in to him. A soothing dusk settled over his brain.

In a last lucid flash, he knew why the men died without fighting.

Dimly he felt the ground shake under him, heard a queer high-pitched whistling that deepened into a deafening roar. The crushing arms loosened as the furry body jerked, then dropped him altogether.

Dana fell heavily, caught through blurred eyes a glimpse of the monster vanishing into a crumbling house some distance away, its shapeless paws over its head.

Lying there gasping the hot, bitter air, Dana laughed weakly.

"Thanks," he whispered. "Thanks, you damned little ball of fire!"

Out in No Man's Land, the Ashi Geyser hurled its fearful corrosive spout high in the air.

CHAPTER III

Death Blow

GETTING groggily to his feet, Dana found the gun he had dropped in the struggle. The weird anaesthetic was wearing off. Cautiously, he approached the house into which the thing had gone—and stood staring into a deserted room.

The beast had vanished.

Through the bull-roar of the Ashi the sound of voices reached him, and the thud of running feet.

"Dana! Geoffrey Dana!"

It was Daddy Gibb's voice, and it had a note of urgency.

Dana shouted, and flares began to bob along between the houses. Daddy's white haystack of hair emerged from the hot dark. The old man had been running hard.

"Dana!" he gasped. "Something important . . . what's happened?"

"One of Satan's special imps jumped me a moment ago," said Dana dryly. "The Ashi went up and scared it off."

Daddy shook his head solemnly.

"God saved you, Dana, for a very special duty."

Dana's hard smile flashed.

"I don't think I've done enough for God so that He should bother much about me. What duty?"

Daddy beckoned to someone behind him. A tall Terro-Venusian half-breed stepped forward, his eyes alight with keen excitement.

Dana swore.

"Varno! What are you doing here?"

"I landed just after you left," said the tall man rapidly. "I have news, Dana, the biggest news of the century. I couldn't trust it to the code band—too many military spies. So I took a chance and came."

"Well?" said Dana, still scowling. Varno was the head of his Venusian intelligence department. He had them on every planet—men not yet known to the authorities, who kept tabs on everything that might be turned into profit for Dana's outlaw empire.

They knew what ships carried cargo worth looting, what men of importance could dig up big ransom money, what trader in jewels might be safely robbed, who could be blackmailed.

They were the coordinators of the vast network of crime Dana ruled. And when things got too hot, there was Sark for a refuge. Dana was no piker. He

worked in high places, and there was plenty of grease for greedy palms to see that the pleas of the Interplanetary Control for the destruction of Sark went unheeded.

"The news had better be important," said Dana grimly. "You had my orders to stick with Venus."

"It is," said Varno, his eyes glittering. "Listen. Have you ever heard of Faruk of Venus?"

"He's a scientist," put in Daddy Gibbs.

"And a good one," said Varno. "He's been condemned as a renegade by all the scientific foundations for perverting discoveries to his own ends. But now he's working on a secret weapon, which Venus says will end the war. And Mars, because of it, is right on the edge of jumping in against Earth."

"You know what that will mean, Dana," said Daddy urgently

"Earth knows," Varno went on. "They almost got the secret, and the scientist. So Venus sent him into space in a camouflaged ship, to let him finish his experiments in peace on some asteroid."

Dana's cold eyes glittered. He was beginning to get the idea.

"How did you get all this?"

"We had something on one of the Venusian High Command, and blackmailed it out of him. No one knew just where Faruk was going, but it narrowed down to this general sector of space. Now, if we could find Faruk . . ."

"We could sell him for enough to make up what the five months of this blasted war have cost us!" Dana's wolf smile cut deep vertical scars in his lean cheeks. "The highest bidder—and every world would pawn its soul to get him, if you're right about the weapon."

"I am," said Varno. "Nobody knows what it is, but it exists, all right." He frowned briefly. "Funny thing. We do know that Faruk was using a Lunar primate in his experiments, and I can't see how that ties in with military weapons."

DANA stiffened, his memory jarred to sudden life. Lunar primate! That pungent odor clinging to the corpses. No wonder it had seemed familiar! Once, in his almost forgotten childhood, he had seen a Lunar primate in a zoo, and screamed with the nightmare for a week.

Understanding came with a rush. That huge, pale-furred body spawned in the cold black caves of Earth's moon, the tiny, featureless head.

"They don't need eyes," said Dana half to himself. "They use infra-red pits, like pit-vipers, to detect the heat frequencies of their prey. The air's thin, so they have sensitive diaphragms instead of external ears, judging their distance from objects by reflection of sound waves. That's why he dropped me when the Ashi went up. Any loud noise causes pain."

He cracked one lean fist into the other palm.

"That explains the throat-wounds and the blood being drawn. The primates put their victims to sleep with that anaesthetic stink and the fluffy fur, and then suck 'em dry. They rarely kill by crushing, because that lets the blood leak out, but when they're angry or frightened . . .

"By the gods of space!" he whispered, his pale eyes widening. "That means—Great Lucifer, it means Faruk is here! Here on Sark. He's using my men for food for his beast, and for . . ."

Seeing Varno's blank face, he sketched the situation rapidly. The half-breed swore with incredulous joy.

"The nerve of him!" he said. "And yet, Sark would just suit him. If he

needs men in his experiments—though I'm damned if I see why—he'd have to go where there were some. Sark is only habitable in certain limits—he'd be safer than on some asteroid with prospectors snooping around. And it's beyond the Law. He can do as he pleases."

"But not beyond my law," said Dana.

Daddy Gibbs gripped his arm.

"Dana, you can't do what you're planning! If you capture Faruk, you can't sell him to enemies of Earth!"

"Oh, shut up," snarled Dana. "Well, now we know what we're up against. We'll find where he's hiding, and then . . . Where's Loren?"

"Loren!" Daddy spun around to study the eagerly listening men. "He's not here. He's been listening. Dana, he'll warn that Venusian, save him from you. You've got to stop him. Venus mustn't have that weapon!"

DANA'S pointed face hardened. Loren wanted desperately to go back to Venus. If he could save the life of this scientist for his world, he could get reinstatement as his reward.

If he warned Faruk, helped him escape, he robbed Dana of a fortune. Dana well knew the law of his kind. When the king-wolf slips, the pack is eager to pull him down. And the pack was already ugly and short of temper.

If this rich morsel was snatched from under their noses, it was the end of his rule.

"Spread out," he said quietly to the men. "Find Loren."

It was Daddy who found his prints leading into the same house into which the Lunar ape had vanished, not five feet from where they had spoken. They didn't come out —but Loren was gone.

Then, like the blow of a cosmic hammer, a roaring shock broke the silence.

Thrown to his knees by a convulsive lurch of the earth, Dana saw a vast flame burst up from No Man's Land.

"Andrews!" he gasped, watching huge blocks of concrete geyser upward like pebbles into the first of the dawn.

Swearing in forty different dialects, the men stared out at that column of flame. It flared, died, flared again, and subsided to a sullen rolling of smoke.

Dana, remembering the unexplained gunfire of a short while ago, scowled in thought. He wasn't much of a chemist, but he knew that the acids and other compounds stored in their pure state could cause trouble.

Still, it was unlikely that the chemical tanks had let go of themselves.

Dana shook his head. No time now for conjecture. No Man's Land writhed. Choking fumes shot in plumes of burning steam from active blowholes. The baked earth shivered, and Dana realized that the explosion had set off subterranean disturbances that might have hideous consequences.

The town of Sark was built on the one solid plateau on the asteroid. If that should break, develop fissures . . .

The Ashi went up suddenly, followed by the smaller geysers, spouting wildly, their internal pressure upset by the force of the explosion. Basins overflowed, sending seething torrents of acid to claw at the edges of the plateau.

"Back into the town!" yelled Dana. "Get into the houses, or you'll suffocate!"

The men, with Varno, turned and ran. Dana, coughing in the bitter mist, grabbed Daddy Gibbs and started to follow. The ground leaped under him, and behind them the Ashi roared up and up.

A second shock threw both men down. Dana's skin burned, his lungs were stabbed with pain. They had to get back into the higher part of town quickly, or not at all.

And he reflected bitterly that if Sark was really breaking up, every man on it was doomed. There were no ships but Varno's little two-seater, not even the battered tramp that brought supplies every two months.

Daddy Gibbs made a queer, high-pitched sound.

"My God, Dana!" he choked. "Look!"

Dana swore savagely, a cold stricture tightening round his heart.

A few feet away the brick pavement was cracked wide in a fissure that stretched as far as he could see, cutting them off irrevocably from the town.

CHAPTER IV

Into the Pit

THE house beside them was their only hope. Fuming rivulets crawled up the street in the new blaze of the sun. The clouds grew thicker. There was just a bare chance that the breeze-created vacuum inside the walls would remain breatheable, and that the bricks would hold back the flood.

Then he remembered the Lunar ape, and Loren. Loren's footprints led inside and vanished, as the ape's had done. Hustling Daddy inside, Dana stooped and examined the dust of the floor.

There was only one explanation. It answered the question of how the ape had caught his victims, coming from nowhere and disappearing as though into thin air.

With a twinge of excitement, he found what he was looking for.

"A trap-door, Daddy," he said, touching the marks of other fingers in the dust. Loren must have seen the ape go down here, and have followed, knowing that he'd find the scientist.

Dana shuddered, thinking what Loren might find down there in the honeycomb of black tunnels under Sark, if the walls of the acid lakes gave way.

He took his hands away and said, "No. Later, if and when this earthquake stops."

The air by the floor was bitter, but still breathable—for how long, he didn't know. There was a hissing sound outside, like the voices of many snakes; acids, flowing in from the gorged pools.

"What a r o t t e n death," Dana grunted.

Daddy looked at him.

"I'm not worried about dying. It's Earth I'm thinking about."

"Blast it!" snapped Dana. "Can't you forget Earth?" A rush of impatient anger surged in him, and he added, "And who the hell are you to be preaching?"

Daddy grinned.

" 'They that be whole need not a physician'," he quoted. "I've had a lot of time to think since I washed up on your beach, Dana. Besides, I'm not preaching. Just remembering.

"Remembering how the moon used to shine, and how the parks smelled after a rain. And snow. How we used to curse the snow! Drifts piled against the buildings, and the wind like a knife." He coughed into the dust, and swore. "But a clean knife, Dana. None of this hell-fired acid."

Dana felt the stinging sweat drip from his face into the dust, listened to the growing hiss of the acid. Swift rage drew his lips back like a wolf's.

"So what?" he grated. "I'm hunting down the Venusian. Earth can buy him, if he wants. Isn't that enough?"

Every shudder of Sark under his body had an echo in his heart. Sark was his, built with his brain and strength, ruled with his power. He was surprised to find how much he minded losing it.

"No," said Daddy quietly. "It's not enough."

Dana's dark, murderous face should have stopped him, but he only blinked and licked dry lips.

"Wish I had a drink. No, Dana, I want you to admit the truth. Admit you're an Earthling. Otherwise . . ."

Dana's voice was silkily soft.

"I'll sell to the highest bidder. Venus, Earth, or Mars."

The bull-roar of the Ashi almost drowned Daddy's words.

"You're an Earthman, Dana. Don't let your hardness trick you into doing something you'll regret."

The cords stood out on Dana's forehead. Again that feeling of being bound, that attempt at shackling his free choice, woke the dark anger in him.

He whispered, "Shut up!" and turned his head away.

WHAT he saw stiffened him in cold horror. Rising through the trapdoor, between them and the door, were the tiny head and vast silvery shoulders of the Lunar primate!

Dana heard Daddy scuff to his knees, letting go a sharp breath that broke in a cough. Through the thickening mist he saw the blank, featureless ball swivel on its neckless mount, sensing the vibrations of living bodies.

Round, hairless lips writhed back to emit a whistling roar. Razor fangs clicked. Then it hurtled up with incredible speed, throwing itself toward the men.

Dana fired without hope, remembering his former encounter, and waited grimly. This would be a battle to the death. The ape, muscles, twitching, was goaded to madness by the heat, the tainted air, and the convulsive heaving of the earth.

He was conscious of Daddy standing beside him, cursing or praying—he couldn't tell which—in a flat monotone. As a purely reflex action, he jammed his left-hand gun back into the holster and let the other buck itself empty in his palm.

The beast didn't stop. The needles were futile. Arms like silver tree-trunks wrapped the two of them close against stifling fur. A wave of musky odor came through the acid reek.

Daddy fought, tearing at the white fur with futile hands. Dana watched the vast arm tighten, heard the slow, deliberate crunch of Daddy's bones.

The old man turned his head. Just for a flashing instant, Dana saw his eyes as the pain left them—clear and untroubled.

Daddy's lips framed the one word, "Earth!" Then he was dead, and the beast held him high, like a rag doll, roaring.

Dana heard the thud of the body striking the floor. A smoking little river crawled in through the door. The beast stood still, shaking, Dana half forgotten in his arms.

Then, with what was almost a whimper, it turned and bolted through the trapdoor, dropping down into utter dark.

Dana, held like a forgotten toy, fought down a swift surge of panic. The air was thick and bitter, hot with a dead, terrible heat. The ape ran with incredible speed through the blind corridors, which had once been blowholes for the molten core of Sark.

In the subterranean silence, Dana could hear far-off concussions, dull and ominous, and sometimes the ape staggered as the floor trembled under him.

Sark was breaking up.

The ape, Dana guessed, was heading for the Venusian's hide-out, whither he had been trained to bring victims—for what purposes he still couldn't guess. If the scientist had not already fled, his

ship offered Dana a mode of escape.

Remembering Daddy, he smiled grimly. If there was any way of salvaging anything from the wreck, he was going to do it. His plan would have to be slightly modified, that was all.

The great underground lakes heaved in their beds. Dana heard the distant hiss and surge of them against their walls. When one of those walls should fissure, it would mean death for any living thing caught in the flooded tunnels.

In spite of the heat, the sweat turned cold on Dana's body.

He wondered if Loren had managed to find his countryman. If the ape didn't get where it was going soon, it wouldn't matter. The explosion had set off successive breakdowns in the half-hollow structure of the asteroid.

He thought of his men, crouching in the mud-brick houses, waiting, or fighting for Varno's little ship. There was a woman he remembered, too—a slim Martian with wicked green eyes. All of them, trapped and waiting for death.

Bitter sweat ran into his mouth as he cursed in silent fury.

CHAPTER V

Faruk

ABRUPTLY there was light, a radium torch in a small natural cave. The beast plunged through a curtained doorway in the far wall and stood still, whimpering.

Dana saw a natural cave, radium-lighted, fitted with the barest comforts, an operating table and considerable scientific paraphernalia, and what seemed to be an intricate radio transmitter. Trays of chemicals kept the air reasonably clear.

A man lay on the operating table, his skull half shaven. Two flat discs lay beside surgical instruments of the most advanced type.

Against the wall sat seven men—the seven who had vanished from Sark. They sat like sleepers, with closed eyes, and their heads, too, were shaven and marked with three red scars, across the temples and the top of the skull.

In one side of the cave was a cage of heavy metal bars. This held five men, packed close together, watching tensely what went on in the room.

Beside the operating table, the razor still in his hand, stood a man in a stained surgeon's smock. The light caught on his sharp cheekbones and ruthless jaw, glinted angry copper in his eyes, set like sparks deep under a bald, magnificent brow.

Facing the man, his needle-gun rock-steady in his hand, was Loren.

The ape dropped Dana and crouched shivering at the feet of the man in the surgeon's smock, whom Dana knew to be Faruk, the renegade Venusian scientist. The man's hand dropped automatically to one vast shoulder, and he shot a fierce glance at Dana. Loren, never shifting his aim, jerked his head toward the disturbance, and his blue eyes widened.

"Dana!" he gasped. Then, "Get your hands up, and turn around!"

Dana shrugged and obeyed, his mind racing. Loren had managed to find his countryman. But he had him at bay. What had changed him so, from a patriotic defender to a captor?

Had he misjudged Loren? Was the Venusian, in the final pinch, as cynical as Dana himself?

"You too," snapped Loren to Faruk. "Get over beside Dana. Keep away from the transmitter. And if you turn the ape on me, I'll get you before he gets me."

WATCHING out of the corner of his eye, Dana saw Loren sidle over

toward the cage and reach down a key ring hanging on the wall. Never taking his gaze from his prisoners, he fumbled for the padlock key and handed it to a gaunt, grey haired man in the cage.

"Open it," he said. "Come out, stay behind me so as not to block my gun, and get into the ship. I'll come after you."

Dana knew the man in the cage from his pictures. It was Jordan Andrews. The other five, including the man on the table, must be his assistants. They all looked pretty groggy, as though the effects of anaesthetic needles were just wearing off.

Dana glanced at the man beside him, absently fondling the ape. A little pulse was beating ominously under the heavy jaw, and the eyes were narrowed but not afraid.

Under cover of the clanking padlock, Dana whispered, "Those are anesthetic needles."

The scientist shot him a quick, searching look.

"The swine said they were poison," he muttered. "Look out for yourself, then!"

His order to the ape was quite inaudible to Dana, but the beast's sensitive diaphragms heard. Silently he whirled and shot toward Loren, arms outstretched.

Jordan Andrews was outside the cage. He tried to get back in, but the press was too great. He tumbled out, followed by the others, whose forward momentum was too great to stop, even though they saw the huge primate bearing down on them.

Loren fired, fast and straight, but the needles slid harmlessly off the thick fur. The scientist had flung himself out of sight behind the radio transmitter. The ape roared and swung its arms.

Then it stopped, its sensory pits baffled by the nearness of Jordan Andrews and his men. Loren sprang aside, shouting to Andrews, and the beast shook its head, whimpering.

Dana's wolf smile flashed briefly. His own poison-loaded gun sprang into his palm.

"Drop your gun, Loren!" he shouted. "You, call off your ape."

Everything froze to tableau stillness as the scientist blew inaudibly on a silver whistle. The ape crouched, shaking its head and roaring softly. Loren dropped his gun close to his foot, his dark young face dangerous under the pale-blond tousled hair.

Faruk stook up slowly, his hands resting over the controls of the transmitter, sweeping the room with his angry copper gaze.

"The ape," he said softly, "will stay where it is, ready to spring. Now—" Dull thunder drowned his words, and the rock floor jarred. Dana's keen ears caught a faint *crack!* and a sibilant hiss, as of an awakened cobra.

"That damned explosion started something," he said between his teeth. "What caused it?"

"Andrews," said Faruk evenly. "He opened his chemical tanks in the hope of trapping my men in the tunnel, but he was unsuccessful.

"Unfortunately, my men lack self-determination, which is essential in some circumstances. This lack of balance is the chief flaw I'm trying to eliminate. They didn't shut off the flow of chemicals, which mixed with drastic results."

He indicated the operating table.

"I wasn't anticipating either the explosion or its results."

Dana's cold light eyes swung to Jordan Andrews.

"I should," he said, "have killed you the day you landed here."

"Don't be a fool, Dana!" Loren broke in. "Andrews was fighting for his life.

This rotten murdering swine . . ."

"I had use for Jordan Andrews," said Faruk quietly. "Which is no one's business but my own."

"He was going to make me work for him." Andrews' gaunt, shrewd face was grim. "Use my chemical knowledge to help him make *those*—" he pointed to the seven who sat against the wall—"or become one of them along with my men."

ANDREWS' eyes met Dana's, and the outlaw sensed the strength that had kept the manufacturer fighting when his life was broken and gone.

"If you kill this man, Dana," said Andrews slowly, "you'll have done one decent thing to justify your life."

Dana's mirthless smile cut deep vertical scars in his cheeks.

"And you, Mr. Andrews, have just snuffed a thousand-odd lives out of existence. This asteroid is breaking up."

Faruk shrugged.

"They'll be a small loss, Dana. What's your game?"

The veins stood clear on the outlaw's forehead, but his voice was level, Almost too level.

"The same as yours. Escape."

"Doesn't your conscience hurt, leaving your men to die alone?"

"Not in the least," said Dana, and knew abruptly that he lied.

Again the floor jarred, and the ape moaned, cringing. The time was short.

"My gun is loaded with poison," Dana said quietly. "I want your ship, Faruk, and you, unarmed. Quite frankly, you're a valuable property, and I intend making the most of you. If you behave yourself, you'll probably be none the worse off.

"If you don't, I shall take your ship and leave you here to die. Is that clear?"

Jordan Andrews said,

"What about us?"

"Nobody asked you to come to Sark," Dana returned coldly. "Well?"

The Venusian stared at the muzzle of Dana's gun, and abruptly the truculent light went out of his eyes. His shoulders sagged wearily, and he sank down on the stool back of the transmitter.

"Everything's g o n e wrong," h e sighed, and dropped his head dejectedly between his hands.

Dana's jaw tightened. He hated whining above all things.

"Get up," he said. "Get up and come on."

"Dana!" It was Loren, and Dana was a little startled. The sullen, repressed mask was gone from the Venusian's young face. It was ablaze with urgency, with some deep emotion.

"Dana, don't take this man back!"

Dana laughed mockingly. He was backing toward the only other doorway in the cave, which he knew must lead to Faruk's ship, keeping Loren and Andrews and the four men covered.

"Not even to Venus?" he said. "Where's your patriotism, Loren?"

"It's because I love Venus that I say it," returned Loren quietly. "Do you know what the secret weapon is?"

Dana didn't, and said so.

"Come on, blast you!" he snapped at the scientist.

"Listen to me, Dana! Why do you think I turned against my countryman? Why do you think I want to rob my world of the certainty of victory? Because I won't have Venus go down in history as a world of monsters!

"If Venus can gain power honorably, well and good. But to rule the System with his weapon, to see my people enslaved . . ."

"It may not go to Venus," Dana told him, "so relax."

Jordan Andrews took one step forward, and Dana read danger in his

gaunt face.

"It mustn't go to Earth, Dana. It mustn't go anywhere."

Faruk's voice broke in suddenly, changed from its former dejection, ringing with harsh strength.

"It will go to Venus, you Earthling dogs! And you, Loren—renegade. Venus will rule the System—and I will rule Venus!"

Things happened, suddenly, bewilderingly. Faruk was safe behind the transmitter. The ape lurched forward as the cave heaved and shuddered. Loren ducked for his gun and sent a stream of needles searching for Dana, who had thrown himself flat behind a metal chair.

Someone screamed. Men surged forward, fell back before the threat of Dana's gun. The ape caught one hapless man and swung him high, its round mouth wide to a whistling roar.

Dana swore viciously. He should have known that a man with a jaw like that wouldn't crumple so easily.

What was he doing there, silent behind the transmitter?

Loren's voice rose sharply high above the bedlam.

"Look out! *Here they come!*"

The seven sleepers had awakened.

CHAPTER VI

The Final Choice

DANA glimpsed them, beyond the charging body of the ape. They went like beasts crouched for the kill, their faces distorted with sheer animal blood-lust.

All were armed with their own anaesthetic-loaded guns. The scars on their shaven heads flushed darkly in the radium light. Dana felt a sudden chill sweep over him.

What was this secret weapon?

The Lunar ape stood erect and roaring. His victim was quite still now. The seven men that had been Dana's advanced.

There was a sudden silence in the cave. Then one of Andrews' men cried out and broke for the door. He wobbled helplessly to his knees, his voluntary centers deadened under a hail of needles from the guns of the seven who marched across the room like a sickle of doom.

Loren's gun barked. Dana saw the glittering needles spray into the oncoming line, lodging in unprotected faces and necks—and the anaesthetic had no effect!

Dana knew that drug—a powerful preparation of Earthly hashish and the sister Venusian drug. It paralyzed the voluntary centers instantaneously, disorganizing thought and leaving the victim helpless but with no lasting impairment.

Yet it was useless against these "subjects" of Faruk's experiment!

Loren's voice rose, shouting his name.

"Dana! Will you sell the Solar System into slavery to these?"

A singing silver rain of needles swept over Jordan Andrews and his remaining men. They fell, just as Dana opened up.

Shooting from a bad angle, he saw his first volley miss, go past them toward the operating table. The second caught the nearest man. He went down, and Dana shouted. They weren't immune to poison!

Loren was barricaded behind an overturned metal table, holding his useless fire.

"Dana," he cried. "For God's sake, think what this will mean to Earth, as I'm thinking of Venus! I'll take you wherever you want to go—if you'll not let Faruk live."

Dana's wolf smile scarred his cheeks.

"Sorry," he said. "I'm neither patriotic nor virtuous."

His accurate fire had brought down three more of the seven. Now, as though under definite orders, the remaining four charged him.

Lying tense, his gun jolting in his palm, Dana's mind raced.

Those metal discs beside the instruments on the operating table. The scars on skull and temple. The immunity to drugs, but not to poison. The sudden bursting of lifelessness into a savage urge for destruction.

And the scientist, out of sight behind his transmitter.

Bits of the puzzle that had plagued him these last seven days began to fall into place.

The ape had brought men to the scientist. Faruk had performed some bizarre operation, turning the men into servants, who in turn went out to gather more men. Thus he had subjects for experiment, and a growing army for attack or defence.

Attack! That was it. These four men, oblivious to the deaths of their comrades, ignoring his fire, came rushing on.

He thought of legions of these creatures, manning ships, aircraft, mechanized land units, formed into battalions of infantry, ploughing with unconcerned ferocity into, over, and through all defences, simply because they knew no fear—nothing but the command to kill.

TWO more were down, and his clip was running out. There would be no time to reload. If one of those anaesthetic needles caught him, he might as well be dead.

The thunder of dissolution all through the asteroid was growing louder. The hiss of acid increased as the pressure of the lake widened the fissure in its walls. The time was perilously short.

Dana gripped his protecting chair and rose.

They were almost on top of him. The heavy metal frame smashed the head of the leader like a rotten melon. The other, surprised by the sudden move, leveled his gun for a finishing shot.

Dana dropped his hands to the floor and pivoted in a perfect *savatte* kick. The gun went flying. Straightening his bent body like a spring, Dana drove the man's jaws together so that his teeth splintered.

It was strange to do this to men whose necks he had saved. Men who had drunk and gambled with him. How many men on Earth would be faced with the same necessity?

How many in the whole Solar System, for that matter? How many worlds would be wrecked, as Sark had been wrecked, to satisfy ambition—Faruk's, or that of the world that bought his secret?

"The hell with it!" snarled Geoffrey Dana.

Just in time he saw Loren's wheat-straw head raised, and dodged the shot.

The man with the splintered teeth was coming up again, his expression unchanged except for the torn and bloody mouth. Dana caught up the chair and swung it again, and saw metal circles in the wreckage of the man's skull as he went down.

Those metal discs. The radio transmitter. And then he glimpsed Faruk's head upraised, and saw the helmet, with the wires running from the crest . . .

Radio-telepathic control! Surgical destruction of the voluntary centers of the brain, amplifying discs, and an especially tuned transmitter linked to the mind of the leader. Better than robots, because the raw human material was cheaper, more plentiful, more adaptable. Dana felt suddenly sick.

Without stopping the arc of his swing, Dana hurled the chair. It swept over the top of Loren's barricade, knocked him backward. His gun went off at the ceiling. And Dana followed the chair.

The cave jolted convulsively. A deep booming roar broke out, a splintering sound, a rush of liquid. The wall of the lake had given way. The ape screamed as Dana wrenched the gun from the stunned Loren's hand.

"Come on, damn you!" he roared at Faruk.

The Venusian rose slowly. His copper eyes were veiled, and Dana saw his lips move silently.

The cave was filled with thunder. A crack opened above the doorway leading to the ship, widened ominously.

Dana knew the ape was coming. He forestalled it, doing the only thing he could do. He leaped straight for the vast silver shoulders, clinging with his left arm around the blind head.

Even in that moment, Dana felt pity for the brute. It surprised him that he did. The ape roared, and he fired into its throat, tearing open the great veins.

It strangled and flung him off, and fell like a stricken tree. Dana saw swift, raging sorrow cross Faruk's face, and wondered that a man who could invent such a horrible form of warfare could feel affection for anything.

He backed into the doorway. Dust sifted down from the crack above his head. Loren was rising to his knees. He didn't say anything, but his eyes spoke. Andrews and his men moaned and stirred on the heaving floor.

Earth-men. Sheep, trapped by the wolves.

THE air was suddenly choking, bitter with acid fumes. Dana could hear the rush and surge of tons of liquid, out beyond the inner cave.

The two men faced him—Loren and Faruk. And Dana hesitated. Raged, cursed himself, and hesitated.

Quite unbidden, Daddy Gibbs' peaceful, dying face flashed across his memory. There was that same inner peace in Loren's face now, even knowing that he had lost.

Both he and Daddy Gibbs had done their best.

The dead men on the floor stirred eerily as the quivering earth shook them. Men with metal discs in their heads, who could rule the System. Rule, and destroy. Destroy worlds that other men loved, as he was discovering he loved Sark.

With Faruk in his hands, Dana could bargain for almost anything. Loren had had the same chance. He had thrown it away, because he wouldn't see his world disgraced and enslaved.

Sark rocked in agony. Dana was filled with sweeping rage that laid the veins like knotted cords on his forehead.

First Sark, and then—Earth?

All planets are Earth to someone.

Deliberately, Dana aimed and pulled the trigger. Faruk fell without a cry, over the body of his ape.

Dana sprang for the nearest of Jordan Andrews' men.

"Hurry up," he snapped. "Help me get them into the ship."

Again Loren didn't speak, but Dana saw his eyes and smiled.

A sardonic smile, because he had violated his own code of never thinking of anyone but himself.

The air was strangling when they got the last of the semi-conscious men into Faruk's ship, which lay ready for flight on a ridge close above the cave.

"Let's go," said Loren. "The whole crust is breaking . . . My God! We forgot the man on the operating table! He's still alive, under anaesthesia."

Dana shook his head and started to speak. But he stopped.

He could just see the walls of Sark over the short curve of the horizon - walls that crumbled and fell. Smoking rivers of acid rolled over them, and fierce, chaotic winds brought him faint screams.

An empire of wolves, built with his brain and heart, to prey upon the sheep. The planets were closed to him. With the destruction of Sark, his empire would crumble. There was no place where he might rebuild it.

His era was over, the last of the outlaw kingdoms of the System.

Going back would mean only imprisonment, the triumph of enemies he had held at bay for a lifetime. He was an exile now, from life itself.

"Get in the ship," he said. "I'll get the man. Oh, cut the heroics, blast you!"

He took Loren's impulsively offered hand. "Make for Earth. Andrews still has enough influence to help you. And it's a damned nice world."

Then he turned abruptly back into the passage to the cave.

THE far wall had fallen, blocking the mouth of the tunnel through which the ape had come. Rivulets of acid seeped through. The crack above the outer door groaned as he entered, split wider.

A stone fell from the block in the tunnel, followed by a corrosive spout. There was a racking shudder, stronger than any before, and the whole wall collapsed behind Dana, shutting him in beyond hope of escape.

He stood among the dead, watching the acid spout claw away the stones around it and form a growing lake on the floor.

He felt suddenly very tired. Closing his cold grey eyes to ease the burn of the air, he ran lean fingers through his grey hair and sighed.

Then he laughed harshly.

"I hope you're satisfied, Daddy," he said. "I hope the devil mixes brimstone with your *tequin!*"

The acid was lapping toward his boots. The town of Sark must be gone now, a heap of bricks and dissolving bodies.

He climbed up on the operating table, fastidiously unwilling to be consumed until the last moment, and took his heavy gun out of its holster. There were still a few needles in the clip.

By this time Loren and his cargo of humans would be safely away. Dana's hard smile flashed in the radium light. For once, the wolves were giving the sheep a break.

The ironic side of it struck him, and he chuckled.

"It will," he murmured, "give the Solar System an awful bellyache to know that I'm the spotless hero who saved it from a fate worse than death. Ha! Wonder if they'll erect a monument to me—or dedicate a new gallows?

"Move over," he added, giving the body beside him a shove. It rolled over, exposing what Loren had not seen; the buried needles of Dana's first volley, that had overshot Faruk's human robots and killed the hapless man.

He lay down, raising the heavy gun to his temple. The bark of it was drowned in the roaring hiss of acid, pouring through the broken barricade.

COMING NEXT MONTH

MR. MUDDLE DOES AS HE PLEASES By *William P. McGivern & David Wright O'Brien*

Here's a yarn that'll really tickle your fancy. It's the first story in which these two masterful writers of humor and fantasy combine their talents. It won't be the last!

PROGRESS IS A HEADACHE

By JOHN YORK CABOT

ALL of us have seen at least one or two motion pictures that were part of the recent Hollywood trend toward biographical portrayals of the struggles of great men in science and medicine. And in each of these pictures we can recall the "great men" having had to face terrific obstacles in the form of ignorance and persecution. But the Pasteurs and the Edisons weren't the only men of science who ran up against the cold wall of human stupidity. Throughout the ages ashcans in the alleyways of progress have been innumerable.

Here are a few receptions given scientific advancement at various stages in history.

Experts in Germany proved—when railroads were new—that train speeds geared up to the excessive and terrifying rate of fifteen miles an hour would cause blood to spurt from passengers' noses; not to mention the absolute suffocation that would be the lot of those passengers aboard trains traveling through tunnels at that tremendous speed.

And speaking of railroads, an eminent minister in this country predicted that the rate of insanity throughout the nation would rise to a staggering count if railroads were allowed to run. He based his prediction on the effect the sight of speeding metal monsters would have on the populace.

And then there was a chap named Westinghouse who had an air brake which he was trying to peddle. One of his interviews about the invention resulted in Commodore Vanderbilt's tossing him out with the remark that he "had no time for fools."

Then, around the year 1597, the poor guy who invented the weaving machine was strangled by order of the state, since it was decided that his machine would cause great harm to the populace.

But the fellow who came out with the first successful cast-iron plow in this country didn't get much better treatment. He was looked on as a loony because it was declared that cast iron would poison the land and result in a widespread growth of weeds.

Even the backers of Fulton's steamboat made poor Robert promise never to reveal who was advancing him money. They didn't want their names connected with anything so "fantastic."

But if at this point you're about to declare that there must have been *someone* with imagination, let us ask you: "Someone like H. G. Wells?" Here's what H.G., in spite of his reputation for foresight, had to say about submarines. We quote—"I must confess that my imagination refuses to see a submarine doing anything but suffocating its crew and foundering at sea."

Along about 1906, just about the time when the Wright boys and a few others were about to give birth to beginning of modern flying, the very well-known scientist Simon Newcomb declared that proof of man's inability to fly, then or ever, was to him, "as complete as it is possible for the demonstration of any physical fact to be."

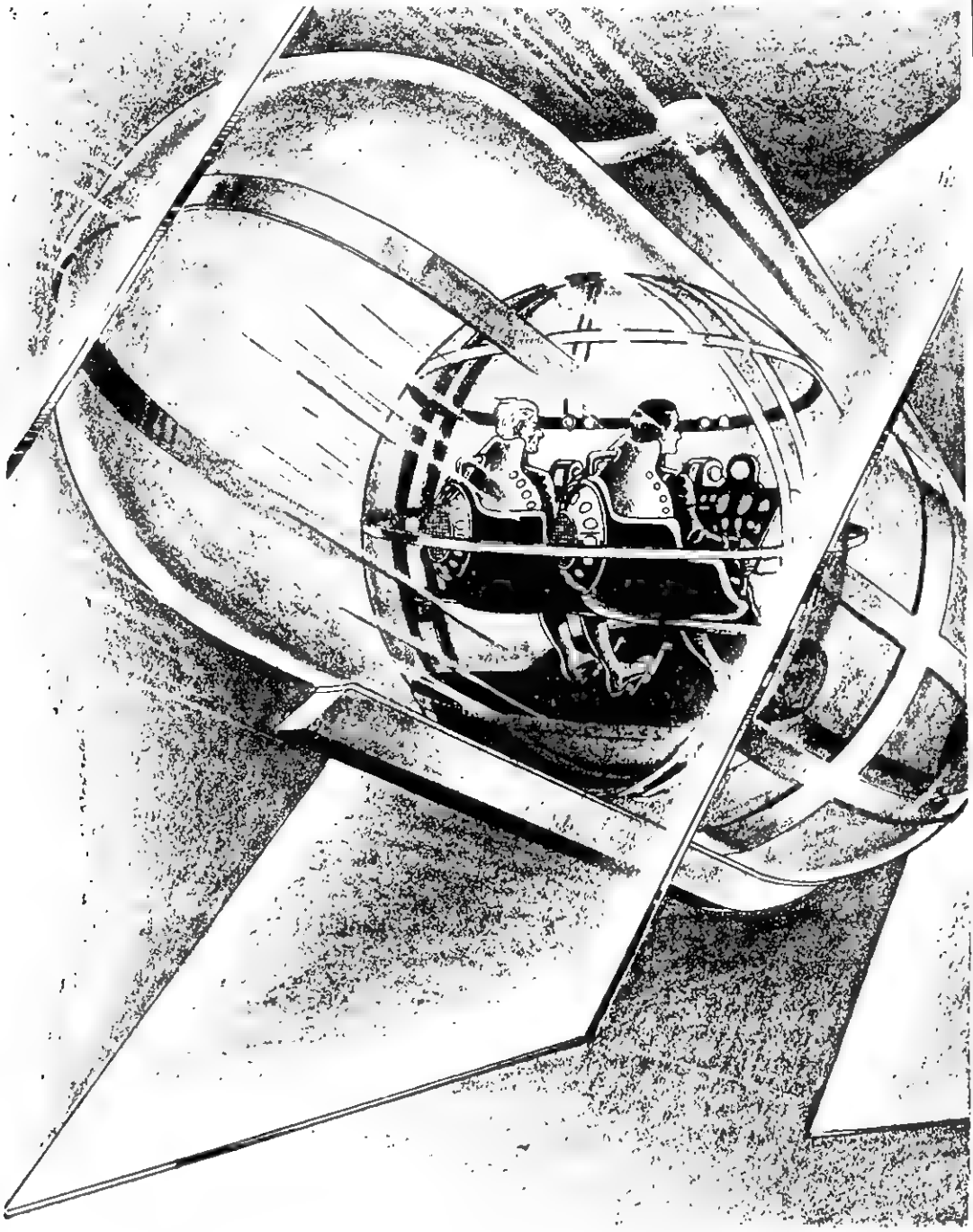
Modern employers would get a kick out of knowing that not so many years ago, a group of pseudo-physiologists protested the introduction of typing lessons by the New York Y.W.C.A. Their solemn, and somewhat medically certified assertion was that the female constitution would crumble completely under the strain of operating a typewriter.

And then, to wind up with Edison, history shows us that even after Edison's first successful experiments in electric lighting, the President of the Stevens Institute of Technology insisted that young Tom's strides were not wonderful successes, but were actually, "conspicuous failures."

All of which should prove something or other, and remind us to hold back our jibes against progress. For what may be fantastic today might very well be substantial fact tomorrow. Don't get out on a limb.

SIDETRACK IN TIME

By WILLIAM P. McGIVERN



They seemed to travel through an endless corridor of plane surfaces

Kingley knew how to get rid of the professor without murdering him—just maroon him in the future! But he found out he wasn't so smart, because when he got back—

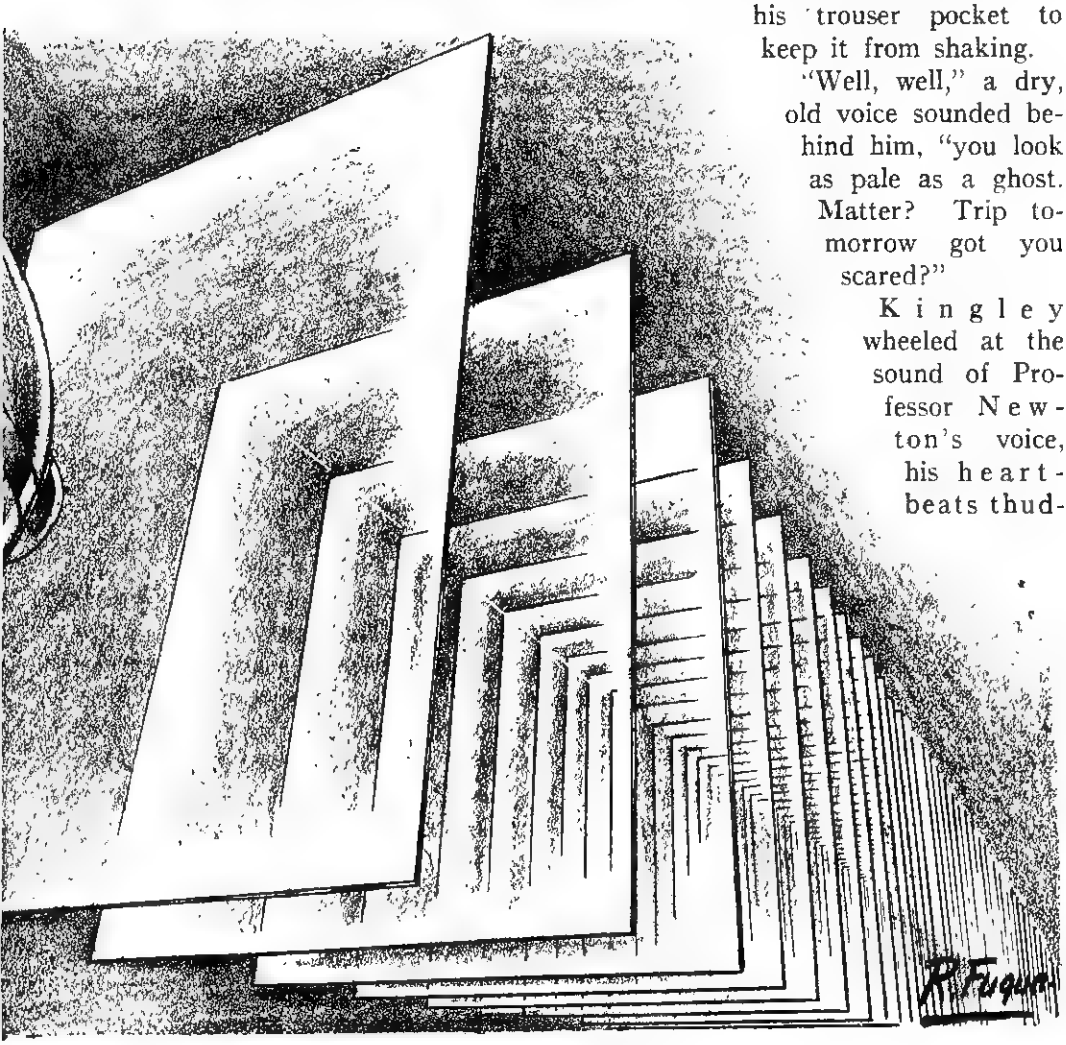
PHILIP KINGLEY'S hand was moist as it closed over the cold butt of the automatic that nestled in the flap pocket of his lab jacket. He swallowed nervously and licked his dry lips. Everything was ready. The old man was washing his hands in the next room and in a few seconds he would step back into the laboratory, muttering absent-mindedly to himself and peering near-sightedly about with bright blue eyes as he always did.

Then—raise the gun quickly and fire and it would be all over!

Kingley knew there was nothing to worry about but he wished the cold tight knot in his stomach would stop bothering him. He wiped his free hand across his damp forehead and then clenched it fiercely and jammed it into his trouser pocket to keep it from shaking.

"Well, well," a dry, old voice sounded behind him, "you look as pale as a ghost. Matter? Trip tomorrow got you scared?"

Kingley wheeled at the sound of Professor Newton's voice, his heartbeats thud-



ding frantically against his ribs. The old man was muttering to himself and his bright blue eyes were peering uncertainly about the lab.

"Where in thunder'd I leave my glasses, Phil?" Kingley heard him mutter. "Can't find a blasted thing when you need—ups." He found them on his forehead and adjusted them over his eyes, harrumphing noisily all the time.

Kingley's hand tightened on the gun in his pocket. With his eye he selected a spot in the center of Professor Newton's wrinkled forehead. He drew the gun half clear of the pocket flap, waited his chance.

"Great thing our trip," the Professor was mumbling. "Ought to be proud of ourselves, eh? First humans to travel through time and pierce the veil of the future. Yessir, a great thing."

Kingley tried to pull the gun then but his muscles refused to obey the desperate command of his brain. He slumped suddenly against the lab bench his chest heaving like a bellows, his heart hammering furiously.

It was no use. He couldn't commit murder. Not cold-blooded, deliberate murder. The gun slid back into his pocket. He couldn't kill this way—but —already his mind was exploring another infinitely simpler and more subtle plan that had just occurred to him.

"S'matter?" the Professor asked grumpily. "Sick? Snap out of it, 'cause"—he paused to cackle—"we can't take any sick people into the future."

"No," Kingley said weakly, "we can't." He watched the old man puttering about the lab bench and his lips parted in a triumphant smirk.

IT was so simple. It was surprising that it hadn't occurred to him before this.

He and Professor Newton were testing the Professor's time machine tomorrow. The machine worked—they had sent it into time by itself—but this was the first passenger trip. If they traveled, say, a thousand years into the future, what was to prevent him from leaving the Professor stranded there and return himself to the present? Then with the Professor out of the way the time machine would be his exclusive property, a source of limitless wealth and power.

It wouldn't be necessary to kill the Professor then, merely strand him in time, and thus eliminate him forever from the present.

Kingley's grin widened as his eyes followed the bent old figure of the Professor as he puttered around the lab equipment. Their time trip tomorrow would be a one way trip to oblivion for the old coot.

"Can't wait," he heard the old man mutter, "to see, really see the future."

Kingley smiled.

"No rush," he thought to himself. "You're going to be there a long, long time."

"READY?" snapped Professor Newton, his old voice trembly with suppressed excitement.

"All set," Kingley answered.

It was the following day. They were seated inside the time machine on the leather tractor seats provided for that purpose. Around them, circling them like a cage, gleamed the shimmering contours of the time machine, undulating weirdly, as if the silvery bars were twisting and bending from one dimension to another.

The Professor's hand moved to a sliding bar that governed the entropy reduction apparatus on the machine, then he turned and nodded briefly to Kingley. His other hand rested on a

bar, calibrated with time units. *Days, months, years,* were marked above small levers and another bar, fitted above this one was marked with the smaller time units of *seconds, minutes, hours.*

The Professor's hand moved a lever and suddenly Kingley felt an amazing sensation. It was if his body had suddenly developed a fluid constituency and was twisting and bending and undulating in accordance with the silver bars of the machine. For an instant he tried to yell, but then the familiar lab, visible through the bars of the machine, vanished abruptly and he seemed to be hurtling at express train speed down a black corridor that seemed, *somehow* to be twisting and bending before him.

How long this sensation lasted he couldn't tell, but after what seemed an interminable period it ceased, almost imperceptively at first and then with a swift abruptness that brought the blood to his temples in a dizzying rush.

The shimmering, undulating bars of the time cage gradually steadied slightly and Kingley was able to see a broad, vista extending before them.

The Professor was nudging him.

"All right, all right," the old voice cracked in his ear. "We're here. Get out, get out. Let's look around."

Kingley climbed out of the cramped quarters and peered about, his curiosity for the moment transcending the real purpose of his trip.

It was a barren, rock-blighted scene that met their eyes. As far as they could see mighty boulders were piled one upon the other and everything was quiet; frighteningly quiet.

"H-how far are we?" Kingley asked.

"Five thousand years into the future," the old Professor said casually. "If there's any humans, they must be occupying another part of the globe."

Kingley clenched his fists nervously as the Professor moved away from the shimmering machine to inspect a peculiarly colored piece of slate. He was bending over, his back to Kingley, inches away from a fissure in the rock that dropped into a shallow valley.

Kingley stepped behind him, noiselessly, carefully. This was his chance. He'd never get a better one. A slight shove with his hand . . .

His hand reached out, and then the Professor turned.

"Say look —" his voice trailed off as he took in Kingley's tense, crouched figure. His eyes widened and his mouth opened but it was too late to cry out. Kingley's hand collided with his frail shoulder. The old man staggered back a step and crashed downward into the shallow gully.

KINGLEY watched triumphantly as the Professor slid down the rough shale siding, clawing frantically with his hands and feet until he stopped at the base of the rock, a cloud of rock dust rising about his frail, crumpled old figure.

Then Kingley wheeled and stepped into the time machine. He grinned exultantly as he set the devices and levers, his hands working swiftly, automatically. But even in his haste he did not forget the primary law of time travel which the Professor had drummed into his head. Never return to the same second in time from which the trip originated. Wouldn't do to get caught in a time groove at this stage in the game.

He heard the Professor's thin, cracked voice shouting frantically and he heard a scuffling, scratching sound as the old man attempted vainly to scramble to the top of the ledge.

Kingley's grin split wider as he listened to these sounds.

The twisting tunnel of blackness stretched before him then, endlessly, infinitely mysterious. Through its black unknown he rushed, backward, backward into the time that was past.

As before, the sensation departed slowly at first and then with a dizzying rush of speed. The silvery shimmer of the bars was once again visible and through their glittering undulation he glimpsed the familiar benches and equipment of Professor Newton's laboratory.

He scrambled out of the machine, the delirious feeling of success and power coursing through his veins like strong drink. His eyes traveled about the laboratory, slowly, gloatingly. All of it his. The equipment, the formulas and most important of all—the time machine.

The Professor was removed from the scene forever. Kingley thought of the old man wandering dazedly about, five thousand years in the future and he laughed shrilly. If any snooper got suspicious—why let them snoop. What could they prove without a body?

His possessive gaze rested on the time machine and he felt himself trembling with anticipatory greed. The money, the power, the position that it would give him were beyond the limits of imagination. Millions—

"Well, well," a horribly familiar voice blasted into his thoughts, "you look as if you'd seen a ghost."

Kingley wheeled, the cold crushing hand of fear closing over his heart.

Professor Newton stood in the doorway!

FOR a frozen instant Kingley stared into the Professor's bright blue eyes and then he staggered back, his jaw hanging slack, an inarticulate bleat welling hysterically from his throat. Somehow—the thought pounded with horrible force into his frenzied brain—the old man had followed him back from time. Followed him from the future to point the finger of guilt at him. Now he was moving toward him.

Kingley's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

"For God's sake," he tried to scream, "Keep away from me, do y' hear? You can't be here, you're not here. Keep away from me."

Instinctively his hand slipped into his pocket, jerked out the automatic. The muscles in his arm refused to lift the gun shoulder high. His breath hissed through his teeth in great choking sobs as he backed away from the Professor. He couldn't kill the old man. No one could. He had gone five thousand years into the future to get rid of him, but like some horrible nemesis the old Professor had tracked him back across the bridgeless gulf of Time.

Suddenly strength flowed into his arm and he raised the gun to his temple and pulled the trigger. The blasting report reverberated through the lab and Kingley never heard the old Professor say:

"Trip tomorrow got you scared?"

Nor would Kingley ever know that in his haste to return to the Present, he had selected *the day before he and Professor Newton started for the Future.*

He didn't even see the figure behind him. The figure to which Professor Newton now said, his voice unmoved by the tragedy that had taken place before him:

"Where in thunder'd I leave my glasses, Phil?"

KID STUFF, EH?

Well, wait'll you read KID POISON by David V. Reed, in the August issue! Here's a story about kids that'll give you a wallop!

« BROADCAST BY BEES »

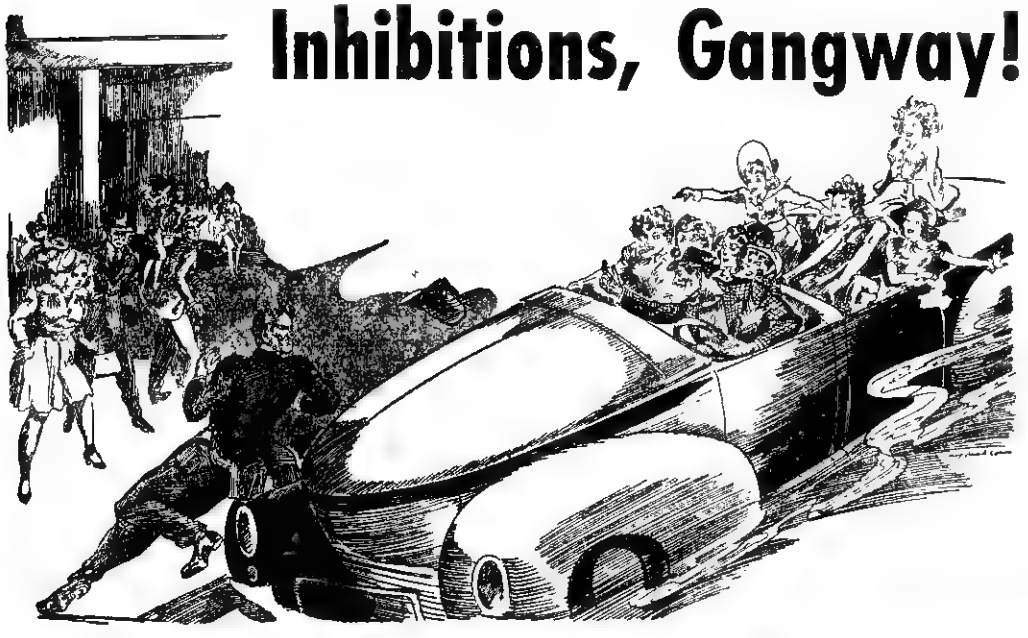
THE bee has always been considered a remarkable little creature, but in the light of recent scientific experiments, it is fairly obvious that remarkable is hardly the word for it. Uncanny or amazing might be a little more suitable. The reason for this change of opinion is the recent tests which seem to prove that the bees are equipped with individual radio sending sets which transmit messages through the air.

It has long been noted that bees sometimes fly for miles to flowers, even when the wind is blowing their scent in the opposite direction. Bees have accomplished this feat in country strange to them, so it is not possible that they memorized the route. The suggestion which scientists approve is that the bee is using some aerial vibration, comparable to a radio wave to assist them in finding their booty and returning home.

Every living body is a storehouse of electricity and exists at times under condition of "inductance" and "capacity". These conditions are the ones which determine the reception and sending of electromagnetic waves. The human body has been used as an antennae in experiments so it is more and more likely that the bees have adapted these qualities and developed themselves into living sending and receiving sets.

Dr. Jacques Loeb has made experiments with varieties of butterfly with practically conclusive results along the same line. So just when we humans are patting ourselves on the back for "inventing" radio we discover that the insect kingdom has been using the principle for centuries.

—P. F. COSTELLO



Did you ever wish you could do just as you pleased? Ever want to "kick over the traces" and let yourself go; and to blazes with silly taboos? Well, then by all means don't miss a grand opportunity to do it! Read MR. MUDDLE DOES AS HE PLEASES and follow his amazing "unhibited double" into the most hilarious adventures in science fiction. Written by two master writers in collaboration—William P. McGivern and David Wright O'Brien. Also featured in the big August issue is EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS with the further adventures of the famous John Carter.

AMAZING STORIES

BIG AUGUST ISSUE On Sale At Your Newsstand June 11

10 Seconds

IT was a little after midnight.

Glancing at his wrist watch, Morelli noticed this. Then, looking across the street once more, he saw that the light in the window of the Vardon Laboratories' fourth floor was the only one still burning.

Morelli grunted in satisfaction. So far so good. It was just like Benny had tipped him off. The old guy worked alone into the early morning hours. The old guy up there in the room with the lighted window. The old guy with the dough.

Morelli smiled inside, an ugly smile, and patted the bulging right hand pocket of his coat. He saw the flickering lantern of the watchman at the gate of the Vardon Laboratories. Then saw it move away. The watchman was starting his rounds. He'd be out of the way for two solid hours, enough to clean out a bank.

It was easy for Morelli to flip the fence, and a moment later he was inside the building. Standing there on the stairs in the darkness, he had to smile. This was easy. Just like Benny had told him it would be.

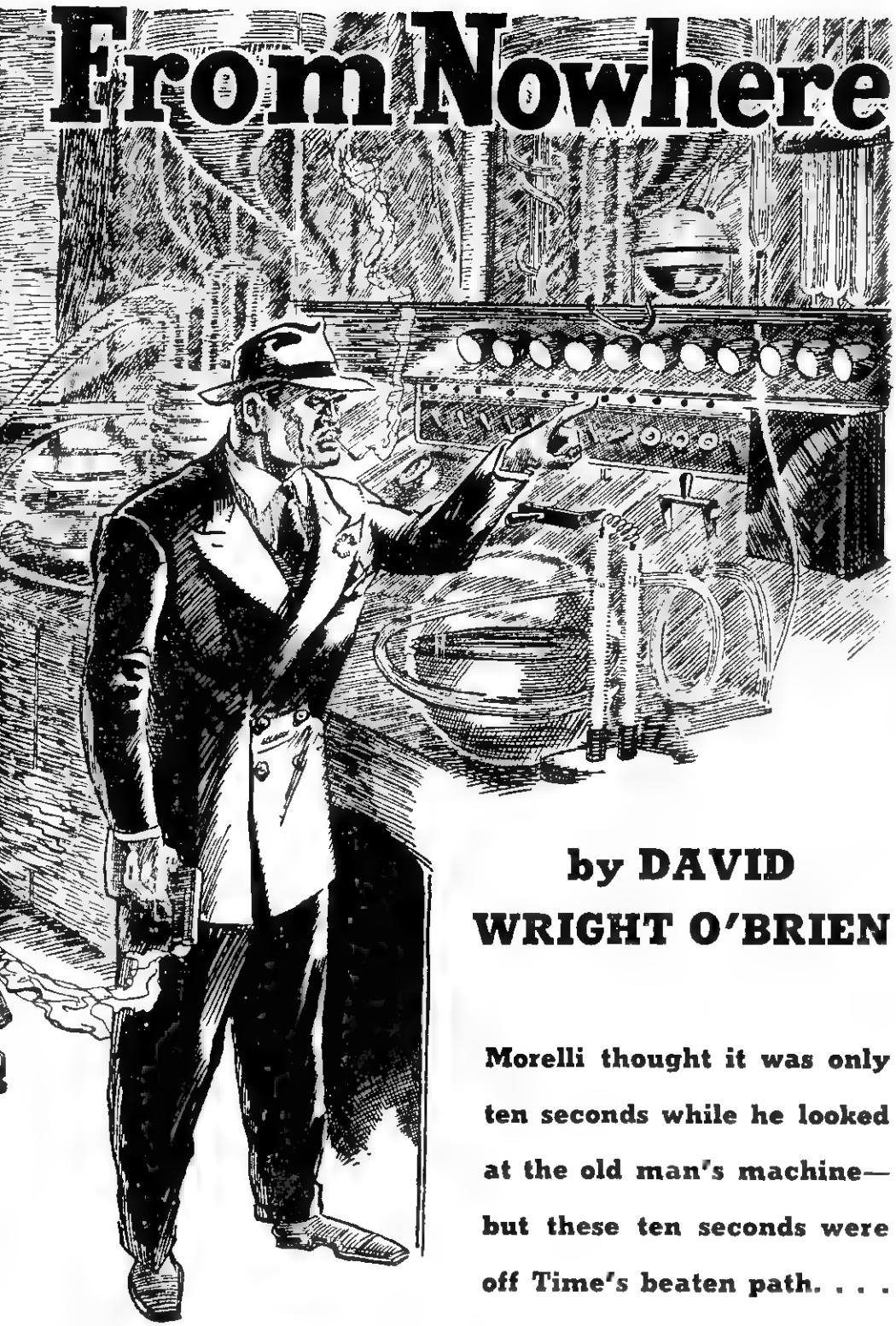
Benny was Morelli's kid brother, and he worked in the Vardon Laboratories as an office boy during the day.

Benny had cased the job neat for Morelli.

By the time he had climbed to the fourth floor, Morelli was breathing easy, but his heart hammered a little faster in excitement. This was a big job, with maybe three, four hundred

Morelli stepped over the old guy's body to the machine

From Nowhere



by DAVID WRIGHT O'BRIEN

Morelli thought it was only ten seconds while he looked at the old man's machine—but these ten seconds were off Time's beaten path. . . .

bucks in it. Benny had said that the old guy always kept that much cash around.

Down the corridor, from an open door, Morelli saw light flooding the room where the old guy worked. Benny called it a lag . . . laz . . . lamutory, or something. Morelli started down the long corridor toward the open door.

His right hand pocket didn't bulge any more, for he held an automatic pistol in his big paw.

Morelli had moved stealthily, and now he paused at the door, peeking carefully around the corner of it into the room. You couldn't be too careful. Maybe the old guy carried a gat or something.

For a moment Morelli didn't see anything, because of the light. Then his eyes focused, and he was looking into a big, white room. A big white room with benches and tables and thing-a-ma-jigs in it. The old guy was over in the corner, sitting on a bench before a table. Behind him was a big machine of some kind.

Morelli wanted to laugh out loud. The old guy was so small, and white-haired, and skinny. The old guy was writing something on papers. Morelli stepped into the room.

"Hey," Morelli hissed. "Hey, you!"

THE old guy looked up. Then he looked toward Morelli, his thin mouth splitting into a vague smile.

"Oh," he said. "Oh, hello. What can I do for you? Are you from the supply company?" And he stood up, pushing his papers back.

Morelli laughed quietly, harshly, and moved across the room. He saw, from the sudden expression that crossed the old guy's face, that he had just noticed the gun in Morelli's paw.

"No," Morelli husked. "I ain't from no supply company, old guy. I'm here to get the dough you keep around."

The old guy's voice was still thin. But it was suddenly sharp, keen.

"How did you get in here?" he demanded.

"I walked," smirked Morelli. Then: "Where have yuh got the dough hid, old guy?"

"I haven't any money," the old guy answered. "Anything in this room belongs to the company. I haven't any money."

The muscles around Morelli's jaw tightened.

"Cut it," he snarled. "There's dough in here. A lot of it. I don't give no damn who it belongs to. I want it! Understand?" He waved his gun to emphasize his impatience.

"I see," said the old guy. "Someone has told you that I keep a supply of cash on hand to purchase equipment I might need suddenly when I'm working alone."

Morelli's eyes narrowed.

"Good guess," he rasped. "And I suppose yuh think I'm gonna tell yuh Benn—" he stopped abruptly, realizing what he had almost said.

But the old guy's eyes flashed funny, and he almost smiled. He'd caught on, and even as he spoke, Morelli cursed himself.

"Benny?" finished the old guy. "Benny Morelli? The office boy on this floor?" He smiled. "I should have noticed the family likeness between you and Benny. You're his brother, I imagine. I've heard about Benny's hoodlum relatives."

"Shuddup!" Morelli snapped, and realized that he was almost yelling. He softened his tone. "Okay, wise guy. Maybe I tipped my lid, huh? Maybe I did. But I want that dough. And I want it right now!" He waved his gun at the old guy. Hot rage was flooding up to Morelli's brain. Rage at the

boner he'd made, and at the old guy for catching it.

"I won't tell you where it is," said the old guy.

"Like hell you won't!" Morelli had advanced toward him, until he stood less than two yards away. "Come on, spill!"

And then the old guy made his mistake. His eyes flicked, for the briefest of instants, toward a cabinet on the other side of the table in front of him.

MORELLI'S eyes followed. Followed and saw, beneath a mound of papers, green sheafs of bills stacked carelessly. The thug snarled, and the old guy stepped back, right up against the machine behind him.

In an instant, Morelli had grabbed the old man by the collar, pushing him hard against the big machine, shaking him.

"Smart, huh?" Morelli hissed.

With sudden strength, the old man managed to writhe partly free from Morelli's big left paw.

"Look out, you fool!" the old guy was bleating. "Do you want to smash the indicator board?"

Morelli paused, still holding the old guy by the collar, surprise filling his pig eyes. The old guy had shown alarm for the first time. But not alarm at the gun, or at his threats. Alarm at the idea of that damned machine being monkeyed with.

Looking at the machine, with its glass board of gadgets, and its tiny battery of lights trained at eye level, he frowned. It was a mystery to him why the old guy should suddenly get so het up over a damned machine. A machine that probably didn't even belong to him.

Morelli shoved the old guy back against the table, then cuffed him hard across the face. The old man's thin body was trembling, but in rage. Rage and apprehension, as Morelli's thick paw went toward the dials on the machine.

"Don't!" the old guy squealed. "You fool! Keep your bungling paws off that machine!"

Morelli had half-turned, and now he wheeled back to face the old guy full. His none-too-quick brain had been jolted. Jolted by the word "fool." And he suddenly remembered the tip-off he had given on Benny.

Maybe the old guy was right. But he wasn't going to be aroused to squeal on Benny, come morning. Morelli felt no loyalty to his kid brother. But if Benny were caught, he'd give him away.

"Okay, old guy!" Morelli snarled. "Yuh asked fer it!" And his automatic blasted lead into the old guy's body from a distance of four feet. Blasted, while the old man sprawled backward over the table, chest blotched with rapidly spreading crimson, face taut in death.

Morelli stood there in the after-silence of the shots, looking at the dead body of the old guy sprawled back across the table. The acrid scent of powder was strong in his thick nostrils. Then he shrugged his bulky shoulders. What had to be done had to be done. The old guy had it coming to him.

But he'd bumped him off!

SWEAT broke out on Morelli's brow. He hadn't intended to kill the old guy. The old guy made him do it. The so-and-so had made him a murderer. He suddenly felt a vast, unreasoning rage against the man he'd killed.

Then his eyes caught the money concealed carelessly in the cabinet on the other side of the table.

"Damn yuh!" Morelli rasped. "I'll get the dough, anyway!"

He stepped around the table, around the body of the man he'd murdered, and

up to the cabinet.

"Damn yuh!" he said again, and quickly sheafed through the papers, removing the sheafs of currency.

Morelli had stuffed the money in his pocket, and still stood beside the cabinet. His rage against the dead old man was swelling.

Then suddenly he smiled grimly. He'd have a last gesture against the old coot. He'd smash the machine the old guy cared so much about. This in mind, Morelli stepped around the table, around the dead man, and back in front of the machine.

He looked at its glass board of gadgets. Its tiny battery of lights trained at eye level seemed to shine knowingly, although they weren't on. Morelli raised his gun to smash it against the glass, then stopped. Curious.

With one paw he flicked the button nearest him. A buzzing started immediately, and the battery of lights flashed into his eyes. Then, quite suddenly, an odd expression crossed Morelli's face as the buzzing machine's volume grew.

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THE police caught Morelli in the old man's laboratory on the fourth floor, shortly before eight o'clock that morning. They found him, on the hysterical summons of a girl who'd arrived there early, performing an utterly incredible cycle. He was moving from a machine, to a cabinet, to the machine. Again and again, moving around the quite dead body of the old scientist.

Morelli was dazed when they jerked him away from the scene. Dazed and stupidly uncomprehending. The coroner's pronouncement over the body revealed that the old guy had been dead since shortly after midnight. Why Morelli should have lingered at the scene of his crime for almost eight hours was beyond the Police Inspector's comprehension.

Morelli, too, when they had dragged him from his weird cycle, had broken free and smashed the curious machine. Then they took him away.

They took the old guy out shortly after that. Beneath his body, on the table, there were found blood stained papers. On one of them was written, in the old guy's hand . . .

". . . and tonight I have made another step in my experiments. I have

increased the Time Machine's ability to enter the past . . . to a total of ten seconds. A sort of looping of Time on itself for an instant. I am now certain that soon it can be greater. But even ten seconds (although the machine affects Time only in relation to the one person upon whom it is directed) can mean a great deal . . ."

THE END

HOW SMART WERE THE ANCIENTS?

By WILLIAM P. McGIVERN

WE in the twentieth century have a tendency to regard ourselves as the creators of "civilization." For the most part we are oblivious to the achievements of antiquity and we have the attitude that any period less remote than the nineteenth or twentieth century must have been peopled by semi-barbarians at the least. To deflate our egos a trifle on this point it might be wise to glance back and appraise the developments made by our "barbaric" forebears.

Let's go back to 334 B.C, the year that Alexander crossed the Hellespont and led his armies into Asia. At that time the Pyramids, mighty monuments of a forgotten civilization, were celebrating their two thousandth birthday.

And in Babylon when the conquerors arrived they stared in amazement at huge walls eighty feet high and so wide that six chariots could be driven abreast on their top. Further investigation revealed to them the observatories where the Chaldean astronomers had compiled records of stellar movement dating back two thousand years. These astronomers had fixed the length of the tropical year within twenty-five seconds of the fact. They had, through their intensive observations, learned of the procession of the equinoxes and they predicted eclipses and explained their causes as accurately as they do today. Here also they found the incomparably beautiful hanging gardens, with great trees growing in mid-air. The powerful hydraulic equipment which had irrigated these gardens was an additional source of wonderment to them. But more wonderful still was the great tunnel under the river bed.

In Persia at this time were libraries, art centers, museums, decorated with finest of tablets and engravings. Here the convex lens found at Nimrod is convincing evidence that the scholars had mastered the principles of optics. One of the most marvelous developments of this age was the truly magnificent library at Alexandria which was erected by Ptolemy. Its rules and regulations read like those of the most "modern" libraries in the world today. Containing seven hundred thousand catalogued books, it was a miracle of efficiency and order. Corps of translators worked diligently translating the best literature of the world. Payment was made to those authors whose works were collected by the library. For instance the works of Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus were obtained from Athens and the authors were paid the sum of fifteen thousand dollars for their labors.

In connection with the library was a museum, botanical and a zoological garden as well as a chemical laboratory and a medical hospital for the dissection of cadavers. Modern surgery would have difficulty excelling the obstetrical and surgical instruments found here. Delicate balances were used in chemical experiments and an incubator for the hatching of eggs had been constructed.

On view in this Alexandrian museum in the year 264 B C. was an item which anyone from the twentieth century would have recognized without difficulty. But a time visitor to this museum might have been puzzled as to how this working model of a steam engine got there. The solution is, of course, that long before Stephensen and Watt designed their models, we find Hero of Alexandria explaining the principle of the steam engine which was later displayed in Alexandria's museum. Glass was commonplace to the Egyptians three thousand years ago and the military campaigns of Alexander were used as models of tactical brilliance two thousand years after by Napoleon Bonaparte of France.

So, all in all, there's little enough for us to be cocky about. The ancients were pretty smart boys and their civilizations and mechanical and literary progress offer substantial proof of this. However, we can take solace from the fact that with all their brains it was *we* and not them who invented the hot-dog.

By HENRY GADE

"BUT I don't want any publicity!" protested the irate, gray-haired man inside the doorway. His pince-nez glasses were almost buried under his overhanging brows as he frowned in irritation. "I'm engaged in some very important experiments, and I'm not going to give out any stories right now, Miss What-ever-your-name-is."

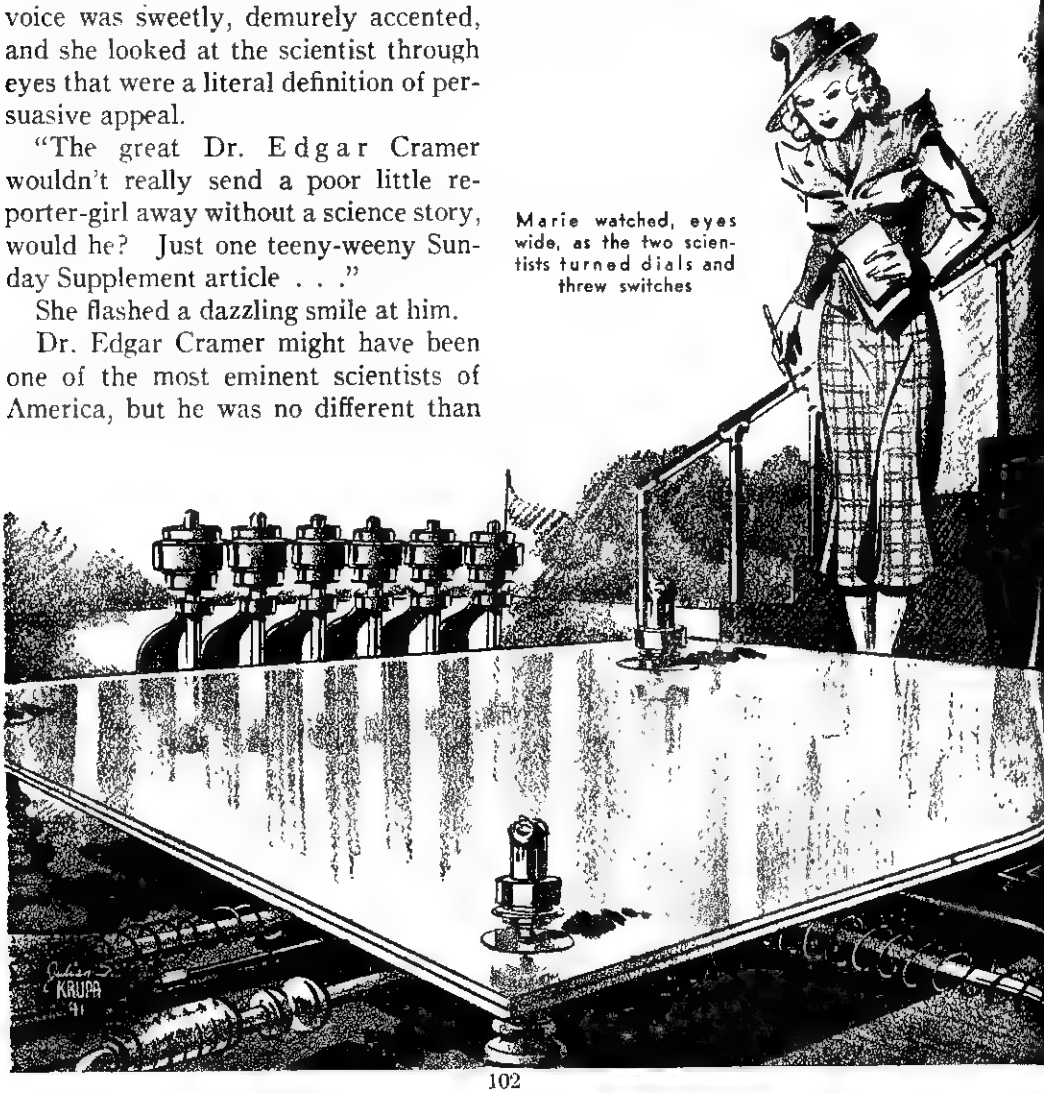
"Call me Marie," said the decidedly goodlooking girl who faced him. Her voice was sweetly, demurely accented, and she looked at the scientist through eyes that were a literal definition of persuasive appeal.

"The great Dr. Edgar Cramer wouldn't really send a poor little reporter-girl away without a science story, would he? Just one teeny-weeny Sunday Supplement article . . ."

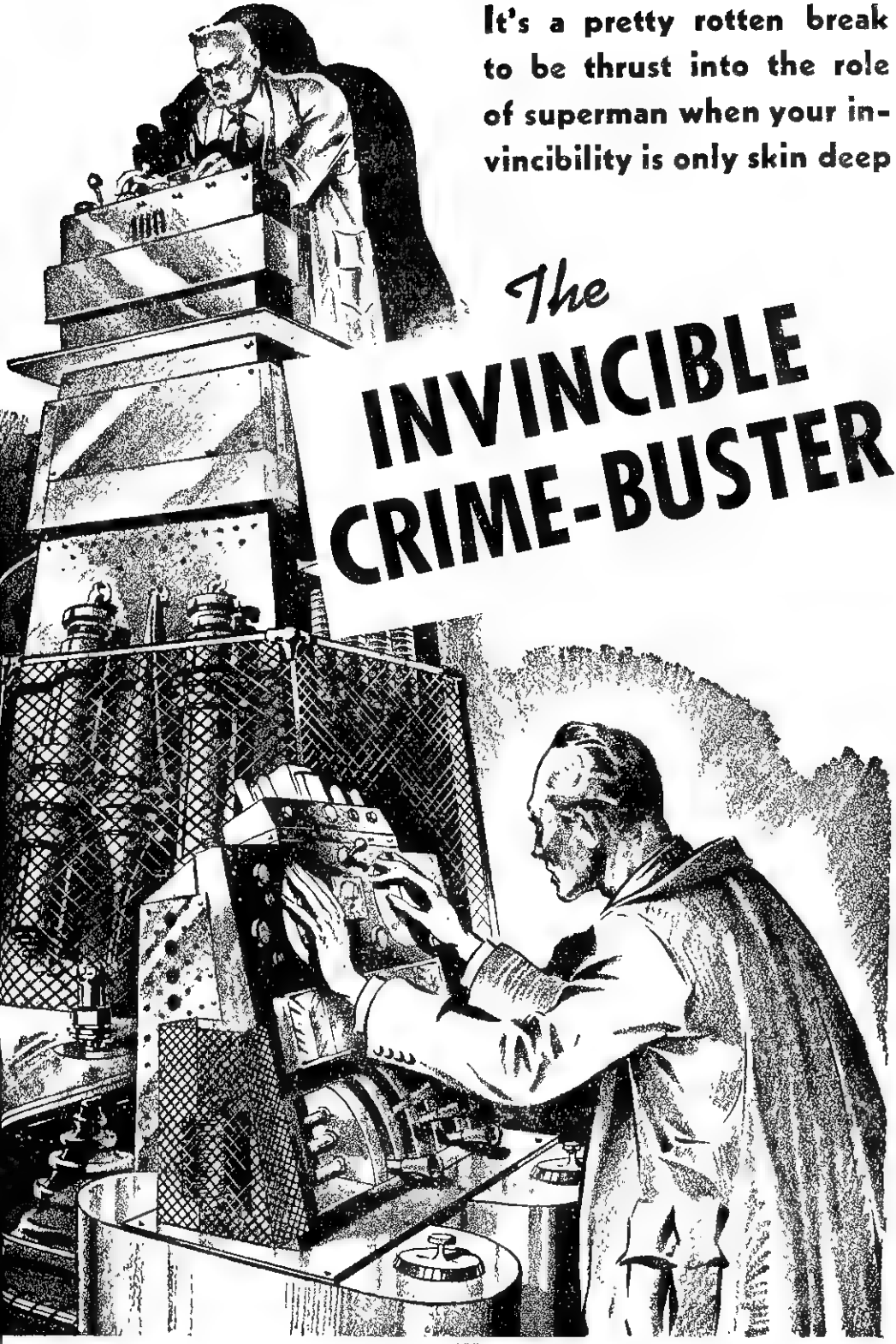
She flashed a dazzling smile at him.

Dr. Edgar Cramer might have been one of the most eminent scientists of America, but he was no different than other men, and the smile that now bathed him with its effulgence had the effect it usually had on men. Dr. Edgar Cramer melted, albeit grudgingly, as though he'd been dipped in the universal solvent that was the standing joke of his profession. No bottle could hold Marie's smile either!

He said: "Well —" indecisively. Then: "All right, young lady, but mind you, it's only because I once had a daughter like you. I never could say



Marie watched, eyes wide, as the two scientists turned dials and threw switches



It's a pretty rotten break to be thrust into the role of superman when your invincibility is only skin deep

The INVINCIBLE CRIME-BUSTER

'no' to her either. Come on in, and I'll give you a half-hour."

As she tripped past him into the laboratory, it was quite easy to see why Editor Dawson of the *Herald* had hired Marie as a reporter. The word "lovely" sums her up as adequately as the limited descriptive capabilities of the English language permit. Integrally she was a neat five-foot-five, in proportions no scientific diet could have helped in the least. She had eyes that demanded a second look, then a third, and still didn't reveal what color they were. A spectrographic analysis might have decided they were violet. Her hair, startlingly dark, full of a baffling sheen, formed a perfect background for a piquant face finished off with a determined chin that might have had as much to do with her persuasive qualities as any other factor. In brief, any story she couldn't attract into the light of day wasn't worth telling.

The scientist led the way into the laboratory. The hum of a generator became evident as they entered.

"Right now I'm working on something that might give you the article you want," he suggested. "This thin sheet of glass, here, for instance." He pointed to a small pane of glass in a framework of metal.

She took the small hammer he handed her.

"Hit it," he invited.

She looked at him once, then promptly obeyed. The glass shattered into bits and tinkled to the floor.

"It broke," she said.

THE way she said it marked *finis* to the last of Dr. Edgar Cramer's reserve.

He laughed suddenly.

"Did you expect anything else?"

"I was already seeing the headline 'Scientist Invents New Unbreakable Glass'," she admitted.

"Unbreakable isn't quite the word," he chuckled. "Now try your little hammer on this pane." He pointed to another exactly like the first. This one was attached by several wires to a complicated apparatus of tubes and coils connected to the humming dynamo. "But be careful," he finished. "Hold the hammer tightly."

She gripped it in firm fingers and brought it down sharply on the second glass pane. The hammer bounced back as though it had encountered solid rubber. But strangely, there was no sound.

"Dr. Cramer," she gasped. "It didn't even *touch* the glass!"

For an instant she stared, then swung the hammer again with all her vibrant young body behind the motion. Dr. Cramer leaped forward in dismay, grasping at her arm. His swift action caught the backward flinging hammer just in time to prevent it recoiling at the girl.

"Careful!" he warned, reprovingly. "You'll hurt yourself." He removed the hammer from her fingers.

"It doesn't touch the glass!" she marveled again, her youthful face alight with interest.

He looked at her.

"You have the experimental spirit of a scientist," he remarked drily, "But I'm afraid you'd soon be a dead one. Your approach is just a bit too direct."

Replacing the hammer on the laboratory bench, he nodded agreement to her statement.

"Yes," he said. "The fact is, the hammer never even touched the glass. It came within a sixteenth of an inch, but it would take tremendous power indeed to make it come any closer. In fact," his voice took on a serious, hopeful note, "I have high hopes that *nothing* can actually touch that glass!"

"Nothing?"

"Exactly. Let me explain . . ."

A bell sounded in the laboratory and Dr. Cramer muttered in irritation.

"Someone else at the door. Pardon me, a moment, young lady, while I see who it is."

He stepped from the laboratory and advanced toward the outer door.

The little man who faced him on the threshold was a classic example of the "nobody was there" who sometimes rings the doorbell.

"My name's Ellsworth," he announced himself in timid tones. "Daniel Ovid Ellsworth. I've come to answer your advertisement."

DR. CRAMER frowned. His gaze roved up and down the little man's scrawny-looking body. He decided that this appearance was mostly due to baggy trousers and a retiring manner. His lack of height and bulk might not be actual. He seemed shrinking away, as though in fear of offending by his very presence. At first glance he seemed to weigh less than a hundred pounds, but a more scientific estimate would have arrived at a figure closer to one-hundred-thirty. He had pale blue eyes that somehow held an intelligent gleam although it didn't seem to belong there. His hair was a washed-out blonde, and his forehead was astonishingly high and broad.

"I advertised for a man who knows physics," Dr. Cramer said hesitantly. "I need experienced help . . ."

Ellsworth ducked his head and drew back a step.

"Wouldn't a Ph.D. do?" he ventured.

"A Ph.D.!" Dr. Cramer snorted loudly. "Certainly! But you haven't—"

"Yes I have," interrupted the timid little man eagerly. "I've had one for three years. University of Columbia."

Dr. Cramer's tone altered grudgingly.

"Columbia . . . well, I must admit—But come in, Mr. Ellsworth. Sometimes a man can be—er—worth more than he appears. I . . ." He stumbled.

Ellsworth ducked meekly across the threshold and strove to convey what he intended to be a reassuring grin.

"I know," he hastened to extricate Dr. Cramer from his embarrassment. "I rarely make any impression. I'm rather retiring and shy."

"What do you know of atomic magnetism?" asked Dr. Cramer gruffly to change the subject, meanwhile leading the way into his laboratory.

Ellsworth's eyes widened as he followed.

"Atomic magnetism? I don't know *anything* about it."

"Nothing?"

"No. There have been no discoveries to warrant such a knowledge, at least of a published nature."

Dr. Cramer halted beside his equipment. His brows lifted.

"You suggest that there *are* such discoveries, still unpublished?"

Ellsworth shifted uncomfortably on his feet, and covertly eyed Marie, who was standing to one side in silence. Dr. Cramer paid no attention to her.

"I have some ideas of my own on atomics," Ellsworth admitted.

"Ah!" exclaimed Cramer. "Then you won't think it odd if I propound the theory that atomic matter is purely electrical in nature, and that magnetism is the binding force that *makes* it matter?"

"Not odd, no. In fact—"

"A magnetized steel bar," Dr. Cramer went on, "becomes a magnet because the molecular arrangement of the particles of iron is more in alignment than normally. That is to say, the 'north' and 'south' poles of each molecule point in the same direction, thus causing a combined magnetic flow that becomes appreciable in its force."

Ellsworth nodded.

"Elementary," he murmured. "And my own tendencies are to apply this same reasoning to atomics. The electrical charges of electrons, protons, subelectrons, combine to compose matter only when a certain alignment provides a definite magnetic cohesion—"

MARIE stepped forward.

"Just a minute, please," she said in confusion. "I'm getting lost. This is all above my head. What about my Sunday Supplement article, Dr. Cramer? After all, you promised me a half-hour." Her voice was reproachful and her violet eyes gleamed coquettishly from beneath her arched brows.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Dr. Cramer staring at her. "I'd completely forgotten you. And I did promise, didn't I? Well, young lady, I think if you will watch the experiment we will perform right now, you'll get enough for your article. I'll explain it for you when we've finished. Will that be all right?"

"All right?" Marie beamed. "I'll watch every move you make! I've so wanted to see scientists in action."

Ellsworth blinked at her.

"You could hardly call me a scientist," he protested. "I've done nothing. . . ."

"You're much too modest," Marie said accusingly. "A Ph.D. from Columbia—yes, I heard you tell Dr. Cramer, so don't deny it—means plenty of scientist in *my* language. And here's your chance to do something."

She turned to Dr. Cramer.

"Go ahead, Doctor," she cooed. "I'll be as attentive and quiet as a little mouse."

The elder scientist grinned.

"Good. Then let's begin."

He turned to Ellsworth.

"Following my theory of atomic magnetism, I'm trying to create an invulnerable armor. It is my belief that I can so arrange the atomic structure of a plate of steel as to perfectly align the atoms of its structure at the surface, perhaps one or two molecules thick, and thus achieve the effect of a thin coat of neutronium . . ."

"I don't quite think . . ." began Ellsworth, then stopped, seeming alarmed at the thought that he had dared disagree.

Dr. Cramer eyed him.

"Go on," he urged. "You don't think what?"

Ellsworth cleared his throat.

"In my opinion, such an alignment would only strengthen the magnetic attraction of the metal, and the result would not be invulnerability, but merely a tremendously strong magnet—which in itself would be no little scientific achievement, if I may suggest . . ."

"I'm looking for something better than a super-magnet," said Dr. Cramer. "And you are quite right about what would happen. But what would you say if I told you I have a means of *reversing* the magnetic force generated by the perfect alignment of the atomic structure?"

"Reversing?" Ellsworth gasped. "Why—that would mean—oh heavens! Battleships plated with such a metal would be indestructible!"

Both men turned as Marie uttered an exclamation and began scribbling hastily in her notebook.

"My article!" she breathed. "It'll be a double-spread feature!"

"I don't think . . ." began Ellsworth.

"Don't think," said Dr. Cramer. "We are ready for the experiment. Dr. Ellsworth if you will operate this generator control exactly as . . ."

He launched into a bewildering formula to which Ellsworth nodded slowly and understandingly, a light of

conviction growing and bringing excitement to his pale blue eyes.

CHAPTER II

Marie Gets an Idea

IN the background Marie hovered expectantly, her eyes eager. She watched as the two scientists made connections, attached wires to a large plate of steel firmly anchored and insulated in the floor, adjusted many meters and controls to micro-precision exactness.

Then at last they were ready and a generator began to whine up a crescendo scale.

"Now!" said Dr. Cramer tensely, flinging down several switches on his side of the room.

Ellsworth moved excitedly, stumbled a bit, and threw down several levers on his side of the room.

"Careful!" warned Dr. Cramer. "This must be done right. This machine is the only one I have and I don't know *why* it works. Its reaction is purely accidental. I must analyze it carefully to discover how to make another one. So don't break anything."

Electric arcs began to crackle, and a strange glow came from several large tubes. The plate on the floor suddenly buckled and emitted a singing noise for an instant.

"I'll switch on this generator now," Dr. Cramer warned. "Then you throw in that condenser."

Ellsworth watched closely. When the elder scientist moved, he extended his hand to the condenser switch. A new scream of energy keened through the room causing Marie to cover her ears with her hands.

Ellsworth fumbled awkwardly, his finger touched a hot wire, and he jerked. Several levers snapped in. Then it happened.

A loud roar smashed at their eardrums. The metal plate on the floor buckled wildly, leaped from its mooring, sailed across the room. Dr Cramer ducked. Instruments smashed in a tangle of debris.

And about Ellsworth a perfect fantasy of electrical energy played, leaping from insulation that smoked. Then abruptly it was gone. There was quiet in the laboratory. Aganist the wall Marie stood, her face white, but she seemed unharmed. Dr. Cramer picked himself up from the floor and stared aghast at the complete wreckage of his equipment.

"Ruined!" he said in a stunned voice. *"Ruined!* And I can't build it again. I don't know how. . . ."

"I feel funny," said Ellsworth suddenly from where he stood with a dazed expression on his face. He swayed on his feet.

Marie uttered an exclamation and rushed forward to support him.

"You poor boy," she said. "You've been shocked."

Ellsworth looked around and shivered.

"It's cold in here," he said.

"Cold?" Marie touched his forehead with her slim fingers. "Why, you *are* a bit cool," she marveled. "But your skin feels wonderfully soft and —*nice.*"

Ellsworth jerked away from her abruptly, his face flaming red.

"I'm all right," he protested frantically. "I feel all right."

Dr. Cramer advanced, limping and dusting off his trousers with one hand while he waved the other one helplessly in the air.

"You're all right!" he shouted. *"All right!* Why you blasted idiot; you've ruined me! I can *never* duplicate that apparatus."

He turned to the girl and his glance withered her.

"*That* man a scientist!" he choked. "He's a stumbling jackass, a blithering nincompoop, a—"

Words failed him. He groaned.

"Get out!" he roared suddenly, his usually scholarly placid face red with anger. "*Get out!* Both of you."

OUT on the street Ellsworth turned to Marie.

"I told you I wasn't a scientist," he said unhappily. "It's been that way every time I tried to do something. Even my own experiments go wrong because I'm so clumsy."

"Bunk," Marie told him flatly. "The trouble with you, Daniel Ovid Ellsworth, is that you have an inferiority complex. You are so afraid of doing the wrong thing that you become all thumbs and the result is, you really do the wrong thing."

Ellsworth tried to resent this, but the result was a bleak stare.

"You see," he pointed out glumly. "What chance have I got? And I *have* tried. It's just—"

"—too bad!" Marie finished. "Well, right now, Doe, you are in the hands of the most capable gold-digger on the staff of the *Herald*. You are going to take me to dinner, and you are going to pay the check without dropping your change, if any, all over the floor. Come on. I know a grand place."

Ellsworth permitted himself to be propelled down the street. He stared at her blankly.

"What's that you called me?" he managed to query after a few steps.

"Doe," she said sweetly. "Your initials. They fit you perfectly. And you ought to be ashamed."

Ellsworth flushed crimson to the roots of his hair, but he made no response. He gasped, however, when she steered him into the magnificent portals of the gaudiest eating place in town.

"Hey," he protested in alarm. "I'm not dressed for this. . . ."

"Doe," she said promptly.

She might have said more, but she didn't, because she was suddenly flung against the wall by a man who shouldered roughly past. He had a gun in his hand. Behind him were two more men. They were backing from the restaurant. One had a black bag clutched in his fingers, and the other flourished two guns.

Ellsworth stood, dazed by the rapidity of events, directly in the path of the fleeing robbers. He clutched at his breast, near his shoulder.

That was a mistake. In gangland, such a gesture means only one thing; the drawing of a gun from a shoulder holster. And the gunman who had shouldered Marie aside acted instantly. He whipped his gun up and fired point blank at Ellsworth—twice.

The shots echoed in the narrow doorway. Acrid smoke bit into Marie's nostrils. She screamed and covered her eyes, crouching in a horrified shudder in the entranceway.

The robbers leaped into a parked car directly outside. It roared away in a cloud of dust and swirling papers.

Ellsworth himself stood stupidly, his hand clutching at his shirt front. His jaw was agape, and in his eyes was the certainty of death. In fact, he *knew* he was already dead. The impact of those bullets, beneath the spot now covered by his clutching hand, had been like the tapping of Death's bony fingers. He'd felt them quite plainly.

Funny how there was no pain to dying. And funny too, that he hadn't fallen in his tracks. Maybe he was dead on his feet.

With a shuddering gasp, he released the breath that he'd been holding without knowing it. Something was in his hand, and he cupped that something as

he removed his hand from the front of his shirt. He stared down.

"Bullets!" he gulped aloud. *"Flattened!"*

And Marie too, having come from her terrified crouch, stood looking down with disbelief in her eyes. She too, gulped.

"Bullets," she breathed in trembling tones. "Two of them—and they didn't hurt you!"

AND now, as he became conscious of the bedlam that broke about them —yelling patrons, a distraught restaurant manager, a bawling policeman who dashed pellmell into the scene, his gun in hand—Ellsworth knew she was right. He'd been shot, twice, at point-blank range, and the bullets had *flattened against his skin.*

Abruptly he buttoned his coat and gripped Marie by the arm.

"Let's get out of here," he uttered hoarsely. "I feel funny."

The policeman blocked their way.

"You hurt, Buddy?" he questioned doubtfully. "The guys say you got shot. Shall I call the ambulance?"

Ellsworth shook his head.

"I'm not shot," he mumbled. "They missed me." He fished a card from his pocket. "Here, if you need us for witnesses. I feel sick. I'm going home."

"Sure, buddy," said the policeman sympathetically. "I know just how you feel. I felt the same way the first time I heard lead whistling past my ears."

Ellsworth nodded dumbly and stumbled out of the gathering crowd, Marie clinging tightly to his arm.

It was two blocks before either of them spoke. Then it was Ellsworth. He turned abruptly to Marie and said:

"I'm invincible. Nothing can touch me." His voice was hoarse, awe-stricken, muted. He was trembling. "Dr. Cramer's machine . . ."

He looked down at the discs of lead in his hand.

"Yes, I know," said Marie, swallowing hard. "That's why your skin feels so smooth. Nothing can touch it. Not even—air!"

"Air!" Ellsworth was startled. He paled.

"What's the matter?"

"I'll die!"

"Why?" Marie clutched at him anxiously.

"No creature can live in its own excreta," explained Ellsworth frantically. "My pores; I won't be able to perspire. The poisons will accumulate. Soon they will fill my system, and I'll die!"

He uttered the last two words despairingly, and his shoulders drooped.

Marie stared. She placed her hand on his face.

"I don't think so," she said hesitantly. "Your skin still has that cool feeling. Just as though it were perfectly ventilated. Why, it almost feels—*wet!"*

He rubbed his face with his hand.

"I can't feel a thing," he said. "I seem numb. No sensation of touch. I felt those bullets, just as though somebody had tapped me with a finger. But I can't feel my own hand. I don't feel any coolness, either."

"It's there," she said firmly.

His brow wrinkled.

"You sure?"

At her nod, he pondered.

"Maybe . . ." he muttered.

"Maybe what?"

"Sure, that must be it. The magnetic forces of the aligned atoms of my skin have been reversed, all right, making it impossible for anything outside to touch me, but those same forces drive my perspiration outward with terrific force, as it forms. That's what you feel, when you say my skin, which you can't really touch, is cool!"

He brightened. "At least, that's one

relief. I won't die in my own body poisons."

"DOE!" said Marie suddenly, clutching his arm.

"Wha . . . what'd I do now?" faltered Ellsworth.

"Nothing . . . yet!" Marie's voice had become higher, shriller, excited. "But you *will* do something. I've just had a wonderful idea! It'll make a grand story. It'll make me a star reporter over ni . . ."

"What will?" interrupted Ellsworth suspiciously. "I don't want that sort of publicity. I'm freak enough, without becoming a circus attra . . ."

But Marie was in an ecstatic trance by now. She was fairly dancing around him.

"I can see the headines!" she chortled. *"The Crime Crusader Strikes Again!; Magnetic Man Breaks Up Big Opium Ring!; Invincible Detective Captures Bank Robbers!"*

"Hey, wait a minute," protested Ellsworth in alarm. "What are you thinking . . ."

"Can't you see?" she asked him excitedly. "You're invincible now. You can't be hurt. You can become a one-man police force. You can clean up this town. Why it's the biggest thing since . . ."

Ellsworth was shaking his head, shaking it more vigorously with every word she spoke. And now, abruptly, he tore from her grasp, jammed his hat down on his head with both hands, and ran. Ran as though ten thousand devils were after him—back in the direction from which they had just come.

"Where are you going?" screamed Marie, sending her feet in flying pursuit.

"Where?" bellowed Ellsworth. "Where? Back to Dr. Cramer, and make him fix my skin back the way it was, that's where!"

"No," screamed Marie. "Don't do it. This is your chance to make something of yourself; my chance to . . ."

But Ellsworth wasn't stopping. In fact, he only ran faster, and Marie was forced to conserve her breath for the chase.

Ellsworth heard her clicking heels behind him.

"Crime Crusader . . ." he panted. "Invincible detective . . ."

He redoubled his speed.

CHAPTER III

John Doe, Enemy of Crime

MARIE was anything, if she wasn't athletic. She'd played tennis and golf, hiked and swam, paddled a canoe and hunted rabbits. And in the winter she bowled on the newspaper's championship bowling team. So she wasn't far behind Ellsworth when he arrived at Dr. Cramer's laboratory, panting and blowing. But she was far enough behind the perturbed little man to burst in just as he was finishing his gasping explanation of his predicament to the good doctor.

"Don't do it!" she screamed. "Don't let him do it, Dr. Cramer." She clattered into the laboratory and came to a skidding halt amid the wreckage that was still strewn around. "Don't change him back to normal—yet!"

Dr. Cramer peered at her, then he grinned humourlessly.

"Don't worry, young lady," he said sarcastically. "I couldn't change him back if I wanted to. I'm afraid he's going to be permanently 'invincible', if that's any satisfaction to you."

Ellsworth paled.

"Y-you m-mean I'm going to be like this the . . . the rest of my life?"

Marie beamed.

"How wonderful!" she cried. "How perfectly wonderful!"

Dr. Cramer peered over the top of his glasses at the girl. There was a peculiar look in his eyes.

"Are you crazy, young woman?" he asked abruptly. "This man is in a dire situation. At the moment I can't foresee all the complications that might result from his condition, but I assure you it is far—very far—from 'perfectly wonderful'."

Marie looked properly abashed.

"But you can't do anything about it," she protested. "So why not make the best of a bad nasty?"

"Just how do you mean that?" Dr. Cramer asked.

"Well, Doe, here—that's right! we'll call him John Doe, the Enemy of Crime!—can't be hurt. So he can go fearlessly into the lair of the criminal element of this city and bring them to the justice they—"

"Just a moment," interrupted Dr. Cramer, "You—"

"I won't do it!" interrupted Ellsworth at almost the same instant. "I won't stick my nose into any gangster's –"

"Yes you will," said Marie sweetly, "because if you don't, I'll make you the biggest freak this side of Coney Island. My column—"

"Dammit!" said Dr. Cramer. "Will you two idiots listen to me! What has happened to Ellsworth is rather unusual, to say the least, but it has some even more unusual ramifications. His skin is now converted into an impenetrable barrier by reason of a tremendous anti-magnetic reversal of repellant energy. Therefore, even bullets cannot *touch* him. Note the emphasis with which I say *touch*. But what about his internal structure . . .?

"Stick out your tongue, young man," Dr. Cramer commanded.

ELLSWORTH complied obediently and Dr. Cramer promptly grasped it between his thumb and forefinger and tweaked it.

"G-glug—*ouch!*" choked Ellsworth, backing away hastily. "What'd you do that for?"

"Just to demonstrate my suspicion that your 'invincibility' isn't as invincible as Marie seems to believe," said Dr. Cramer triumphantly. "Internally you are perfectly normal."

"He could keep his mouth shut," said Marie.

Dr. Cramer glared at her. Ellsworth looked injured.

"What if he got appendicitis?" snarled Dr. Cramer. "What surgeon could operate on a man whom the scalpel couldn't even *touch?*"

"Oh my!" gasped Ellsworth, clutching at his abdomen.

"Gangsters couldn't give him appendicitis," said Marie stubbornly.

The scientist threw up his hands in despair.

"I give up," he wailed. "All right, take him out of here. Make him the Enemy of Crime, if you want to. Make him stop bullets in a circus. Make him wallow in molten steel. But for the sake of my sanity, get him out of here!"

Ellsworth clutched at the scientist's sleeve.

"You mean you won't—won't try to help me?" he quavered.

"No, I don't mean that. I'll work on it. I have some theories, but I'll need peace and quiet. Come back in a month. Maybe I'll have some news for you then."

"A—a month?" wailed Ellsworth. "Why that's—"

Marie stepped up determinedly and took Ellsworth by the hand.

"Come on, Doe," she ordered with finality. "We've got places to go and things to do. We'll just come back in

a month—after you've cleaned up the city—and see what Dr. Cramer has discovered."

"But I don't want to clean up the—"

She fixed him with a penetrating stare.

"Doe!" she said scornfully.

He looked back at her.

"Don't—don't say that," he began threateningly. "I'm not—"

"Then come on," she retorted tartly, tucking his arm under hers, "or I'll begin to think you're a coward."

He flushed, suddenly reversed the position of their arms, and marched out of the laboratory. Marie waved a triumphant hand at Dr. Cramer in farewell and cooed:

"See you next month, Dr. Cramer. And meanwhile watch the papers."

The scientist stared after them, a blank expression on his face. Then:

"I've simply got to find a solution to that boy's difficulty!" he muttered. "That girl's going to be too much for him!"

And he turned to survey his wrecked laboratory with a judicial eye . . .

AN hour later Ellsworth and Marie were closeted with the editor of the *Herald*.

"It'll be the biggest story the *Herald* ever printed!" finished Marie enthusiastically. "We'll put the *Record* right out of business—and put me in the ace reporter class," she added.

"Yeah," said Dawson with a smirk. "Don't forget that last, you little chiseler. Where do you get that stuff? What's to prevent me from assigning Burke to this story? This ain't a woman's angle—"

Marie leaped to her feet.

"You just try it, Mr. Dawson," she stormed, "and we'll go over to the *Record* so fast it'll make your head swim. Won't we, Daniel?" she turned and added sweetly to Ellsworth.

He nodded weakly.

"Y-yes, sure we will," he corroborated with a sickly smile.

Dawson glared at them.

"You trying to run my paper?" he thundered.

"How perfectly absurd," said Marie calmly. "You know very well we're not asking for a thing. This is a personal favor to the citizens of this fair metropolis. We clean up the criminals—I get a by-line, and a decent pay check every week, say for as long as I want to work, which will be until I get married, and—"

Dawson reached in his desk and pulled out a paper.

"Here, sign this," he said brusquely. "Put down your idea of a 'decent' salary and then get the hell out of here."

Marie picked the paper up and scanned it.

"What's this for?" she asked.

"It's a contract," said Dawson. "And it's also a release. We contract to buy your stories, and give you a by-line, at a stipulated salary. You release us from any responsibility for personal damage to your pretty physique—which you'll no doubt get, monkeying around with the crime ring in this city!"

"Don't worry about me," said Marie. "I can take care of myself."

"We won't worry," promised Dawson, sarcastically, "and that paper'll keep us from any possible worry."

Marie snatched up a pen, scrawled an amount in the salary-line and then affixed her signature.

Dawson looked at the signature.

"Marie Gerling," he read aloud. "Okay, kid, that's it . . . *holy smoke!*"

"What's the matter?" asked Marie innocently, scanning her well-manicured and crimsoned nails.

"The matter! Lookit this amount—this 'decent' salary!" Dawson raved.

"*I* don't make that much!"

"You will," said Marie complacently, "after these stories begin to break."

"Yeah?" Dawson snarled. "*If* they break. Here, if you're so sure of your superman—"

HE reached into his desk drawer and pulled out an automatic. He handed it to Marie.

"Bullets don't hurt him," he said. "Go ahead and shoot him. Before I sign a salary contract, I want more than your word."

Marie pouted a moment, then took the gun and pointed it at Ellsworth.

"Stand still," she ordered.

Ellsworth was backing away. He was pale.

"I don't feel cool now," he hastened to say. "Maybe it's worn off . . ."

"Close your mouth," ordered Marie implacably, "and your eyes. I'm going to shoot you in the face."

Ellsworth gulped, then as her finger whitened on the trigger, he hastily closed his mouth and eyes tightly and stood there like a man facing a firing squad, rigid in every muscle.

Bang! The shot echoed in the narrow confines of the office and Ellsworth staggered back. Then he opened his eyes and peeled a flattened disk of lead from the tip of his nose. With a shudder he tossed it onto Dawson's desk where it thumped hollowly on the wood.

"My God!" gasped Dawson, staring at it.

Then, with a hand that trembled, he picked up a pen and signed his name to a contract blank, which Marie pocketed.

"Come on, Daniel," said Marie, steering the still white-faced Ellsworth to the office door, where a frightened secretary now stood, staring about in confusion.

"Just a little target practice," Marie informed her sweetly as she shoved past.

Editor Dawson watched them go, a frown on his face. When they had disappeared, he turned to the secretary.

"Get Burke," he rasped. "Send him in here on the double-quick. I've got a job for him."

The secretary whirled and left the room, and Dawson wiped a trembling hand over his sweating forehead.

"I gotta do something about this," he muttered. "The guy really can stop lead!"

CHAPTER IV

The Crime-Buster in Action

"THAT warehouse," Marie's muted voice came from the utter darkness of the alley in which Ellsworth and the girl reporter stood, "is full of stolen furs."

"I don't care," returned Ellsworth nervously. "I wish we hadn't come here. Anyway, how do you know there's furs in there?"

She sniffed.

"I'm a reporter, and I have ways of knowing a lot of things the police don't know."

"But what's that to us. Why don't we just tell the police there's stolen furs in there, and let them raid the place?"

"Because they'd need a search warrant, and they wouldn't risk it without being sure—they could stir up a nice lawsuit if they happened to be wrong."

"All right, but why did we come here? I'm not going in there—"

"Yes you are. You're going to go in and hide yourself in a big truck, already loaded with stolen furs. Then you wait until the truck pulls out at

midnight, and . . ."

Swiftly she outlined her plan of action while Ellsworth listened silently, mumbling to himself at intervals as some especially juicy bit of intrigue rolled off her tongue.

"It's the silliest thing I ever heard of," he whispered fiercely as she finished.

"But it'll work like a charm," she predicted. "And you'll have done your first amazing feat of crime-busting."

"They'll probably arrest *me* as one of the crooks," he said.

"No they won't, because ten minutes after you do your stuff, the whole story of how two reporters from the *Herald* turned the trick will be on the streets."

"But how can you do that?" he protested. "It's eleven, or nearly that, right now."

"I'm going back to the office right now and write the story," she informed him. "And even as you do your stuff, the presses will be rolling."

He gasped.

"Even before it happens? What if it *don't* happen?"

She gripped his arm.

"Daniel Ovid Ellsworth John Doe," she said, "if it doesn't happen, it will be because you are a coward—and—and I'll never speak to you again!"

"That'd be a relief," he remarked.

Suddenly there was the sound of a slim palm against flesh, and a suppressed feminine expression of pain.

Ellsworth grinned in the dark.

"You forgot I was invincible, honey," he chortled.

There was a moment of blank silence, then her voice came softly through the darkness.

"What did you say, Danny," she whispered.

"I said, you forgot I was invincible," he repeated.

"You said something else, too," she insisted.

He mumbled something unintelligible in response. Then she said:

"If I didn't know you couldn't feel it," she breathed, "I'd kiss you."

"You could try—" he began, but stopped as he realized she was walking swiftly away from him down the alley.

"You'd better be on that truck," he heard her voice come back to him softly. "I'm counting on you." Then she was gone.

Standing there in the darkness he rubbed his cheek and frowned.

"Dr. Cramer," he muttered, "you'd better find out how to change me back to normal. It's an awful shame to be invincible with a girl like her around!"

TEN minutes later he had pried open a window facing on the alley, and scrambled inside. The interior of the warehouse was black as pitch, and he fumbled around for a moment, first closing the window behind him.

Then he tripped over a crate. He fell.

"Damn!" he muttered.

He reached into his pocket and found a match. Striking it, he sat up and peered around.

The light didn't reach very far, but he could see he was in a large empty space, haphazardly strewn with empty and shattered packing cases. In the middle of the floor, before the large roll-door, stood a huge moving van, silent and waiting. Before the match went out, Ellsworth saw that there were big doors at its rear, shut now.

Ellsworth got to his feet and made his way through the darkness to the truck. He couldn't open the back doors, so he stood there thinking for a moment. Then he shrugged in the darkness, lit another match, and looked around the strewn floor. He spotted what he wanted, a hatchet obviously

used to open these crates that lay about, or close them, as the case might be.

He picked it up and smashed the lock of the truck, knocked off the handles. It would be too bad if he couldn't open it later. He'd just be trapped in the truck. He hoped nobody'd notice the lock was missing.

Then he clambered into the truck, and found that there was little room. Packing cases were stacked inside, all of them heavy, as though tightly packed. He pried a board loose on one of them and felt inside. He clutched something, but he couldn't feel what it was. He pulled it partly out of the crate and lit another match.

"Furs, all right," he muttered. "Marie was right. Now I hope everything goes according to the way she thinks it ought to. You know, some day things aren't going to go her way and she's going to be in trouble . . ."

He sat down on the crate and waited.

IT was nearly an hour later when he heard noises outside the truck. There was the sound of a door slamming, then muffled voices. As far as he could determine, there were two voices, gruff and deep.

Then at the front of the truck he heard one of the men climb into the driver's seat.

"Okay, Spike, open her up," he heard the man's voice beyond the stacked crates of furs.

The warehouse echoed to the rumble of the big doors opening, then to the coughing roar of the truck as the motor started. It moved slowly forward, and from the sound, Ellsworth knew it was outside, in the alley.

The doors of the warehouse, just behind the truck, rolled shut again with a thump, and Ellsworth, his fists tightly clenched, listened fearfully as footsteps paused a moment at the rear door of the truck, then went grating around the side toward the front.

"Get going," said the voice of the second man, now in the seat up ahead. "We wanta get across the state line before three."

The truck turned ponderously down the alley and into the street.

Ellsworth bounced around in the back, but beyond the irritating jiggling up and down, ignored the sharp jabbing of the packing cases because he didn't feel them. But he did exclaim in dismay as a jutting nail ripped a long tear in his coat sleeve.

After ten minutes he pushed open the rear door a trifle and peered out. He grunted as he saw that the truck was just entering the downtown section. Almost time to go into action.

He let the rear doors swing wide, and turned to the cases of furs. He pulled a few of them to the edge of the truck and looked out again. Then suddenly he began heaving the cases out. At the same time he set up a terrific din of shouts.

"Help, police!" he screamed. *"Stop thief! Help! Police, police!"*

With all his might he tugged at crates of furs and hurled them to the pavement outside, where they crashed in a magnificent crescendo of smashing wood and splinters. Furs strewed all over the street.

"Help, police!" Ellsworth went on bellowing, as he worked might and main at his fantastic task. *"Stop thief!"*

Abruptly the truck ground to a halt, and pelting footsteps came around from the front seat. A burly gangster charged into view, his face a mask of incredulous amazement and alarm. In his fist he held a snub-nosed automatic.

"What the hell you doing there?" he screamed.

He whipped up the weapon and fired

point-blank at Ellsworth.

Ellsworth stopped his shouting immediately and closed his eyes. Like gentle tappings he felt the lead slugs tear through his coat and shirt and flatten against his skin.

They stopped, and the roar of shots ceased.

From the distance came the shrill scream of a police whistle, and the rising whine of a squad-car siren.

Ellsworth opened his eyes, and looked at the gangster who was staring at him, the whites of his eyes seeming to fill his whole face.

"Migord!" the plug-ugly gasped. *"Me eyes is going back on me.* I missed him wit' the whole magazine at five feet!"

He whipped up the gun again, but this time Ellsworth launched himself off the tailgate and plummeted down upon the gangster.

BOTH of them went down in a heap, and Ellsworth landed on top. He lashed out with his fists and the gangster yelled.

Ellsworth felt himself hurled aside, rolled, and regained his feet to face the enraged gangman. He stood, arms upraised in an attitude he'd once seen a fighter assume in a photo for a boxing magazine.

Suddenly a huge, ham-like fist loomed before his eyes and crashed solidly against his face. Ellsworth went hurtling backward as though a pile-driver had smacked him. He rolled over, somersaulting twice, and came to a rest position against a lamppost.

He was dazed. His brain felt as though it had been vigorously shaken in a cocktail mixer. He was dizzy—and worst of all, *it hurt!*

But it made him mad; didn't this plug-ugly realize he, Daniel Ovid Ellsworth, was invincible!

Ellsworth dragged himself to his feet and advanced grimly. The gangster closed with him, and this time tried body punches. Ellsworth was jarred by the blows, but they didn't hurt. He grinned. And the gangster, his eyes wide with incredulity, drew back a fist and cocked it as though he had decided he was going to launch a 45,000 ton battleship for the defense program.

Ellsworth brazenly stuck out his chest and the fist collided with it. There was an anguished howl of pain from the gangster, and the sound of cracking knuckles. Then as the fellow writhed in agony, Ellsworth stepped in and deliberately drove first a left and then a right into the lawless one's face. Down went the gangster, flat on his back.

And down came Ellsworth on his opponent's belly in a beautiful dive; a dive such as an amateur might make into a pool, with his broadest expanse first.

There was a *whoosh* of breath from the fallen man and he went limp, his face white, out of the fight completely.

And now, from the rear Ellsworth heard a volley of shots. He felt gentle tappings on his back and his head.

And almost simultaneously there came a rending scream behind him, and the thud of a falling body. And hard on the heels of all this, a charging policeman rushed up, gun still smoking.

"Did they get you, Buddy?" he yelled.

And as Ellsworth rose to his feet from his position atop the vanquished gangster, the officer's eyes widened, and he paled, proving how positive he had been as to what the answer to his question would be.

"Begorry!" he gasped. "A volley in

his back, and the spalpeen's *getting up!"*

THE scream of a siren drew up to a climaxing blast of sound and a squad car pulled up with a shriek of brakes. Out piled two more policemen, guns drawn.

"What's this mess, Kelly?" gasped one of them. "Ye'll be after getting a medal for this, it looks like!"

"I didn't do it," the officer designated as Kelly replied bewilderedly. "I just run up when the excitement started, and I plugged that feller over there as he was emptying his gun into this little man's back . . ."

"Come now, Kelly," remonstrated the squad-man. "He ain't even hurt. An' if it's an alibi you're after," the squad-man peered judiciously at the furs and crates scattered over the street, "you won't be needing any. This looks like the loot from the Bergman Furrier robbery of last week."

Kelly bristled.

"I tell ye', that little guy got plugged at least five times in the back. Take a look at his coat, if you think I'm blind!"

Ellsworth let the three men examine his back. Then he spoke apologetically.

"My skin's kinda tough," he said. "They didn't hurt me."

The squad-man passed a hand over his eyes. He turned to his fellow officer.

"Mike, that tavern's selling worse stuff every day. I think we gotta raid it someday."

But his voice trembled, and he drew away from Ellsworth in awe. Then his eyes fell on several flattened pellets of lead at Ellsworth's feet. He advanced and picked them up.

"Tough!" he raved, a tinge of madness in his voice. "My God, lad, you got a hide like a battleship!" He reeled back to the squad car and climbed into the seat.

"Mike," he croaked hysterically, "you clean up this mess. I wanta rest. I been reading too many of them fantastic adventures!"

But Mike was staring at Ellsworth, a troubled look on his face.

"He don't *look* like Superman," he protested. "Where's his ballet suit and his cape—"

CHAPTER V

Trouble for Marie

IT was ten the next morning before Ellsworth awoke, dressed, and went downstairs to have his morning coffee. Usually he would have had to wheedle the landlady of the rooming house to prepare anything for him at this late hour, but this morning things were different.

She had the table set, and steaming coffee ready for him. And placed conspicuously beside his cup was a copy of the morning paper.

"Oh, Mr. Ellsworth!" she burst out as he sat down, "I'm so proud of you. It was simply wonderful. To think that one of my boarders is famous! Even if they don't use your real name —but I suppose that's for your protection—but then I can't see why they used your picture—and the magnificent way in which you overpowered that gangster—the Enemy of Crime—facing bullets that way as though they meant nothing . . ."

Ellsworth no longer heard her unending chatter as he stared at the paper, for there in black headlines was "JOHN DOE SMASHES STOLEN-FUR RING!" and the subhead ran: "Invincible to Bullets, the Enemy of Crime Overpowers Gangsters, Solves

Bergman Robbery. Furs Worth $350,000 Recovered!"

Swallowing hard, Ellsworth read the story that followed.

"Late last night, the city's new champion of justice, John Doe, the Enemy of Crime, single-handedly uncovered and overpowered the crime ring responsible for the huge Bergman robbery of last week, and recovered $350,000 worth of furs from this and other robberies. Police, following up the clues uncovered by the Invincible John Doe, from whom bullets were alleged to have bounced harmlessly, traced license plates on the robbers' truck and arrested four men, believed to be the balance of the gang.

"In last night's battle, in which one member of the gang was shot to death by Patrolman Patrick Kelly, John Doe, the mysterious new champion of justice, boarded a huge van loaded with furs, and in a pitched battle against the driver and guard, both armed, forced them to halt. He knocked one man out in a fistic encounter, and was braving a hail of bullets from the gun of the other when Patrolman Kelly arrived and joined the fray, killing Doe's assailant instantly.

"According to testimony of Officers Donovan and Kelly, Doe was struck by no less than five bullets, which failed to harm him.

"Said Doe: 'I have tough skin!'

"In an interview given your reporter, the Enemy of Crime said: 'I will relentlessly track down every criminal element in the city and bring them to justice. I cannot be injured. I am invincible. Let gangland beware!' "

ELLSWORTH gasped.

"I did *not* say that!" he exclaimed. "Oh, this is terrible!" With a gulp he swallowed his coffee, and then let out an anguished bellow.

"What's the matter?" gasped the housekeeper.

Ellsworth clutched at his throat and stomach.

"Hot!" he choked and sputtered. "That coffee—hot—oh my insides . . ."

He rushed to the kitchen and hastily drew a glassful of cold water. He gulped it down, and sighed in relief.

"I forgot myself," he moaned. "I never could stand hot coffee—it burns the delicate tissue of my throat and stomach . . ."

THE ringing of the phone from the next room drew the housekeeper from her anxious hovering over him. Ellsworth could hear her voice answering it as he drank another glassful of water.

"Yes, yes, of course, I'll call him right away . . ."

She appeared in the doorway.

"It's for you," she gushed. "A young lady—says she's from the *Herald*—such a nice voice—wants to talk to you . . ."

Ellsworth set down his glass hastily and went to the phone.

"Hello, Marie," he said. "I just read the paper . . . I don't think you ought to say such things. It's not going to be so easy to clean out *all* the criminals in the city . . ."

Her voice interrupted him.

"Never mind the papers. You just go over to my house, 214 Elm Park Avenue, and meet me at a quarter after twelve. If mother isn't home to let you in, wait on the front porch. I'll be there from the office as soon after twelve as I can make it. I've got so many things to tell you—about our next moves."

Then before he could protest further,

she hung up.

Frowning heavily, he turned from the phone.

"I've got to go out, Mrs. Schaeffer," he told the inquisitive housekeeper. "I'll be back in time for supper."

He donned his coat and hat and left the house. Walking swiftly down the street, he neared a long, low-slung black sedan parked beside the curb, its motor purring softly. He passed it by with scarcely more than a glance, and continued on down the street.

But as he passed an ornate cornerstone on a building, adorned with a gleaming brass plate that said INDUSTRIAL MUTUAL BANK, he glanced inside the revolving doors, and halted abruptly. For inside, he could see clearly, a man faced the teller behind a grilled window, and in the man's hand was a snub-nosed automatic.

Ellsworth gasped.

"Bank robbers!" he exclaimed.

HE shot a glance at the waiting sedan, behind him, then once more looked into the bank. Abruptly he wheeled and ran toward the black sedan. Ignoring the driver, who threw open a door and drew a gun, he lifted the hood of the car. Reaching in, he grasped a handful of wires and yanked them loose. The motor died.

At the same time the robber in the car leaped out, clubbed his gun, and struck Ellsworth a terrific blow over the head. Ellsworth's head nodded a bit, but he felt only a slight jar. Calmly he turned around, reached out and tore the gun from the man's limp fingers, and returned the compliment with interest. With astonishment and dismay still on his features, the man slumped down, unconscious.

Without another glance at this phase of the robbery scene, Ellsworth launched himself toward the bank doors. They were just beginning to revolve, and the first of three men was coming through, a gun in one hand, and a heavy leather bag in the other.

He fired at Ellsworth the instant he saw the charging little man, but it had no effect. Head lowered, the Enemy of Crime barged ahead, straight into the burly bank-robber's body. The man staggered back, his foot jammed in the still revolving door, and behind him, one of the two remaining bandits was caught inside the door.

Abruptly, apparently because a teller inside had finally gotten up enough courage to press the alarm button, a clanging bell began an uproarious alarm.

Desperate now, the gangster tore his foot from the door, hurled Ellsworth aside, and sprinted for the car. Ellsworth tumbled to the sidewalk, swiftly sat up, and reversing the gun in his hand, fired at the fleeing man.

The robber staggered, but recovered and leaped into the car. Savagely he ground at the starter, then leaped out again, looking wildly up and down the street. All at once he sagged down, coughing blood. Ellsworth's shot had taken effect.

Shots blasted in Ellsworth's ears, and he saw the second bandit pouring lead at him. Calmly he closed his eyelids to narrow slits, drew a bead on the man's kneecap and fired.

A howl of agony rent the air, and the man went down, moaning and screaming.

Now down the street came the vigorous whistle of a police siren, and answering blasts from several directions of patrolmen's whistles.

Ellsworth rose to his feet and began to grin.

"This is fun!" he chortled.

He beamed at several spectators who lurked behind parked cars or light

posts, calmly pocketed the gun and walked through the revolving door of the bank to confront the last of the bandits, who came leaping at him, black satchel in hand, and finger curling around the trigger of his weapon.

"Drop that money!" ordered Ellsworth.

THE bandit snarled, and for answer, pumped three swift shots into Ellsworth's body. Ellsworth smiled at him, and the bandit stopped his headlong rush forward. Desperately he fired twice more at the little man who stood before him, his face going pale.

"Hell!" he screamed in sudden panic. "I'm going nuts!"

"No," corrected Ellsworth smoothly. "I am John Doe, the Enemy of Crime. You have met your Waterloo. You will please drop that money, give me that gun and raise your hands in the air. I am invincible. Your bullets cannot harm me."

The bandit's eyes popped wide with fear and incredulity.

"The Enemy of Crime!" he gasped. He went white as a sheet, and began trembling, backing away as though he saw a ghost. "The guy that messed up Moran an' the boys las' night . . ."

The satchel dropped from nerveless fingers, and gibbering with fear he tossed his gun at Ellsworth's feet. Then, sobbing, he cowered against the wall, his hands held stiffly, although tremblingly, over his head.

And that was the scene that confronted the police who tore through the revolving door at that moment.

In the lead was a captain of police.

"Glory be!" he exclaimed. "It's John Doe!"

He glanced around the bank, at the awe-stricken tellers and customers who were now relaxing from the tension of the robbery and coming from their places of concealment and duress. One of them seemed more composed than the others. He was a tall, dark man, and on his face was a peculiar expression of calculation and, oddly, of annoyance.

"Holy Mother!" the captain burst out. "He didn't miss a trick! He got every one of them, *and he ain't hurt!*"

Ellsworth looked at his fingernails, made a motion of blowing on them, then dusting them against his lapel.

"You can take over from here, Captain," he said smoothly. "The Enemy of Crime has struck again. And now, I must be going. I have an important engagement."

He strolled nonchalantly from the bank and down the street.

TEN minutes later he rounded the corner near Marie's house and walked briskly toward the green-painted iron fence that ringed the little grass plot in front of the house.

Ahead of him, nearing the gate, he saw a familiar figure tripping hastily forward. It was Marie.

He smiled suddenly and quickened his pace. He'd almost been late. No doubt she was expecting him to be in the house, waiting for her.

Suddenly he saw the car pulling slowly along the curb beside the girl; saw it come to a stop and the door open. A man leaped out, and then Ellsworth yelled.

"Marie! Look out!"

But he was too late. The man clapped a hand over her mouth, swept her up under one brawny arm, and leaped into the back seat of the car. With a roar of its powerful motor it surged away from the curb and swept away in a swirling cloud of dust and papers.

Ellsworth had already been running toward the scene at top speed, but now,

seeing that his chase was hopeless, he came to a thudding-soled halt, staring in dismay after the departing car and its kidnaped girl.

"They got her," he said in agonized tones. "Somehow they knew she was behind the Enemy of Crime, and they've got her. They'll—" he paused, horrified at the thought of what they might do to her.

Then his thoughts swung to another angle. How *did* they, whoever "they" were, know she was behind him? No one else knew—except of course Dr. Cramer, Editor Dawson, and . . . there really was no one else.

On the ground at the curb he spied a small black object. He picked it up and found that it was a little leather-jacketed notebook. It must have been dropped by either Marie or her kidnaper. He snatched it up and hastily thumbed the pages. They were all blank; the book was a new one, unused.

Disappointedly Ellsworth stuffed it in his pocket. He looked once up and down the quiet street, which looked as little like the scene of a kidnaping as any street could have looked. No one but himself had seen the crime.

"John Doe, the Enemy of Crime," said Ellsworth. "Daniel, this is one crime you've *got* to solve, and *quick!*"

He turned and ran back the way he had come.

CHAPTER VI

"Hands Off!"

DANIEL ELLSWORTH stared across the desk at Editor Dawson, a frown on his face.

"Just what do you mean, Mr. Dawson?" he snapped.

The editor of the *Herald* stared back.

"Just what I said. Miss Gerling knew what she was getting into, messing with the gangsters of this city—and that's why I had her sign that release for our protection in case she was injured in her efforts to make a name for herself as a reporter.

"Under these circumstances, we have fulfilled the letter of our responsibility. We have notified the police of her kidnaping, and all of the forces of law and order in the city, and the state, plus the Federal Bureau of Investigation, are on the case. If she can be found, they will find her."

"But," protested Ellsworth, "surely you, or some other member of this paper, must have known something of her movements, either in the past or those proposed, that would give me a clue as to where to search for her."

"I don't know a thing," Editor Dawson said emphatically. "She remained strictly secretive on this story, and all I know is what I read in the paper—even if it is my own."

"It strikes me that you care precious little what happens to your employees," said Ellsworth coldly.

"On the contrary," snapped Dawson, "we care a great deal. But you must see that in cases like this we must protect ourselves—"

"Yourselves! What about her? You ought to be turning over every stone trying to uncover her whereabouts in an attempt to rescue her. Instead, you are refusing to give me the slightest assistance. You glibly tell me the police have been informed, and that everything is being done. I don't see a damn thing being done!"

"Mr. Ellsworth—or John Doe—or whatever your name is," said Dawson acidly, rising to his feet, "I think you've said about enough. I'll have to ask you to lea—"

The outer office door opened and a tall, dark man entered.

"Hold it a minute, Burke," snapped Dawson. "I've got to get rid of this fellow first—"

Ellsworth was on his feet, staring at the newcomer. His eyes were wide, and he wore a puzzled set of tiny wrinkles over the bridge of his nose.

"Saa-ay," he said. "You were at the bank this noon, during the robbery, weren't you?"

Dawson looked sharply at Ellsworth, then at Burke.

"What about that, Burke?" he asked, frowning.

"Sure," said Burke easily. "I was one of the victims. Mr. John Doe, the Enemy of Crime, saved my weekly stipend for me. I'd just cashed my pay check. T'day's payday, y'know."

Dawson's face cleared.

"Oh," he said. "I thought for a minute you'd slipped on that assignment I gave you yesterday."

Burke shrugged.

"Not me. I got that all finished already. Nothing in it at all. I'm about ready for a love-lorn column, or the national defense editorials now. These society interviews bore me."

Dawson turned to Ellsworth.

"AND now, Mr. Ellsworth," he said levelly. "Will you kindly get out of here? And even though you've given this paper two good stories already, I think it would be just good advice to tell you to keep hands off the gangsters in this city. They're just too tough for us. If I'd thought we could clean 'em out before, I'd have tried it. But I like being healthy. And you will too, even if you are invincible, as you call it."

"How do you mean that?" asked Ellsworth.

"Just as good advice," said Dawson, sitting down again and folding his hands on his desk. "I've got one reporter in a kidnaping, and Lord knows, after what you two have done to gangland in two days, a murder! That's enough for me. I'd just as soon we don't have any more casualties."

He smiled, but there was no humor in the grimace.

Ellsworth jumped at the word, murder.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Murder. Do you think they'd . . ."

"I most emphatically do," said Dawson, "and remember, there's more ways of killing than by bullet. You aren't invincible to all types of violence. Take poison, for instance—"

But Ellsworth wasn't paying any attention. He was jamming his hat down on his head and striding through the door.

"I'll find her," he muttered grimly, partly to himself as he shouldered past the tall Burke. "I'll find her if I have to tear this town down, stone by stone!"

He looked once at Burke as he left, and frowned still more. Something funny about that man . . .

BUT outside on the street he halted, helplessly. What could he do? How to begin? Where to start his search?

He knew nothing, absolutely nothing, about gangland. He didn't know anything about the location of their possible hangouts. He didn't even know where the slum section was.

Absently he thrust his hands in his pockets and clutched his key-case, a paper of matches, and then the little black leather-bound notebook he'd picked up at the scene of Marie's kidnaping.

He brought it from his pocket and thumbed through it a few times, noting its blank white pages. The pages were cut unevenly, and they didn't all

flip over in sequence. He sought out a stubborn one with his fingernail. And then his eyes widened—the frown vanished from his face, and a thrill shot up and down his spine.

There on the white sheet of the notebook was an address in a feminine hand, undoubtedly Marie's. It was: "148 River Street—Barker's Warehouse."

Ellsworth thrust the precious notebook in his pocket and looked about for a taxi. He saw one cruising along, a block down the street and sprinted for it.

IT was dark before the taxi got out of the downtown traffic-snarl caused by the evening rush, and 148 River Street was at the far end of the dock district on the other side of the city. So by the time Ellsworth climbed from the taxi and surveyed the gloomy front of the dark warehouse that was No. 148, it was late enough to have left the warehouse area shrouded in complete gloom. Only dirty-globed street lights flared with sickly illumination at half-block intervals.

Ellsworth sized up the place as the taxi drove away and wheeled out of sight at the far end of the street. Then he walked slowly around the corner of the building and into an alley that led down toward the river.

The building, as he circled it, was completely dark. As far as he could see, there was no watchman.

Stepping up to a window, he pushed up on it. It didn't budge. He walked to another. It too was immovable. For an instant he stood debating, then with a grunt, punched his invulnerable fist through the pane near the catch. There was the tinkle of glass inside the warehouse, then silence again.

Ellsworth listened. Nothing. Reaching in, he loosened the catch and shoved the window up. It opened with a protesting squeak, and then he was inside. He left it open.

From the front of the building, through grimy windows, a dim light filtered from the street light outside. It was enough to vaguely outline the objects inside the warehouse, and after a moment, as his eyes adjusted themselves to the gloom, he was able to see clearly enough to move about.

The interior was amazingly orderly, and several huge trucks were parked on the concrete floor. Stacked about in piles were crates, cases, and large jars of what seemed to be chemicals. The place reeked with the sharp odor from the jars.

Ellsworth grunted.

"Don't look much like a gangster hangout," he muttered to himself.

He searched the main floor thoroughly and found absolutely nothing beyond what one would expect to find in a perfectly honest warehouse.

Then he found the staircase leading to the upper floor. He mounted it and found himself in a small section that obviously did not extend the whole length of the building. Here were the offices, and they were also deserted. There were several glass-enclosed offices, a large safe, a long row of files, all locked. They were modern file cabinets, and they gleamed in the light from the street below.

"Must be a pretty good warehouse business," observed Ellsworth. "This stuff is swanky enough to be in a big downtown office."

At the rear he found a metal-clad door, which was securely locked.

"Fire door," he muttered. "Maybe leads to the fire escape, or to the next building."

But again, he found nothing. The address in Marie's book had been a blind lead. There was nothing here—

least of all any sign of Marie.

Ellsworth groaned and sat down in one of the leather-covered office chairs. What to do now? He was stymied - blanked out—helpless. And Marie was in the clutches of a gang that was desperate. They'd murder her and throw her body in the river . . .

THERE was a sinking sensation in his stomach, followed by a sharp pain that grew worse moment by moment.

Ellsworth clutched at his abdomen in alarm. What was this?

The pain grew worse, a gnawing, aching pain that was like nothing he'd ever felt before. Then suddenly it dawned on him.

"*Appendicitis!*" he gasped. "Oh, Heavens, I've got appendicitis!"

In a sharp wave of panic that drove him to his feet, John Doe, the Enemy of Crime, saw with vivid brilliance in his mind's eye the horrible fate that awaited him. Beyond all possibility of aid, he was doomed to suffer the agonies of the damned; to die torturously with no hope of reprieve. A superman on the surface, and a mass of vulnerability on the inside! The infected appendix would become more inflamed, would swell, and finally burst, sending deadly poisons through his body until Death came to end his sufferings!

Standing there in the dark, after that moment of panic that almost sent him fleeing blindly to nowhere, Ellsworth felt a grim calm descend upon his ill-fated soul.

"So be it!" he muttered hoarsely. "I'll die game. When we meet in that mysterious land of the hereafter, Marie, you won't have to call me 'Doe.' I am not a coward!"

He struck a dramatic pose, but its effect was lost even upon himself as a new twinge of agony—pain that was almost unbearable now that he knew the deadly cause of it—shot through his shuddering body and doubled him up.

Quickly he sat down again and rested until, gritting his teeth, he brought his nerves under control and quelled the pain to some extent.

Then he remained quietly, thinking. Death faced him, but before he died, he had a job to do. He had to find Marie and rescue her from the fate that faced her. He had to finish the job she had set for him—carry out the dream that had brought her to such a fateful end—if end it was. He groaned.

"Not you, Marie. I—" He stopped suddenly. He realized that he'd been about to say 'I love you.'

"By golly," he whispered, an awed note in his voice. "I *do* love her!" The discovery smote him for a moment, and he remained motionless. Then:

"Too late!" he groaned in a surge of dramatic self-pity. "Oh cruel fate—I'm going to die!"

His mind raced on, and now a thought struck him. He leaped to his feet.

"The door!" he exclaimed. "That fire door—*it's locked*—and no fire door should *ever* be locked!"

HE rushed through the dark office, barking his impervious shins on furniture. Forgotten was the pain of his inflamed appendix. And in a moment he stood before the metal-clad door, looked at it.

Surely this was no legal fire door! Rather, it was just as he had suspected, a door behind which might be—Marie! A prison door! The place where she could be concealed, her cries unheard through its sound-proof thickness.

His fingers tore at the lock, a great affair of clever pad-lock contrivance. In a moment he realized the futility of his action and cast about for something with which to force it. There was noth-

ing in the office.

In haste he plunged for the stairway, down it, and into the warehouse below. There he found a crowbar, and mounted once more to the office.

Inserting the bar in the lock, he pried mightily. There was a protesting shriek of tortured metal, then a sharp snap. The lock shattered into fragments that whistled as they flew about the room. He blinked his eye shut just in time to catch one piece on his impervious eyelid. That had almost been disastrous!

He threw down the crowbar and fumbled with unfeeling fingers at the hasp of the door. He got it free finally, and pulled the door open.

Inside was blackness. He peered in. Then he heard a low moan.

"Marie!" he cried.

He plunged through the door and knelt in the gloom beside a dim form that lay prone on the floor. It was Marie, lying face down, her hands bound behind her, fastened to her bound ankles, and in her mouth was a gag.

Ellsworth's fingers tore at the ropes, as he almost sobbed at the indignity that been done to her. Finally when they fell loosely in his hands, he lifted her by the shoulders, tore off the gag, and looked into her face anxiously.

"Marie," he asked in quavering tones, "are you all right? Please say you're all right!"

She sputtered a moment, then spoke, her voice hoarse.

"I—I guess so," she managed to get out. "That nasty old gag has nearly choked me to death."

He helped her to her feet, assisted her to stumble around for a few steps, until her circulation resumed, and steadied her legs.

"Oh," she moaned. "My feet. They're asleep. I've been tied that way for hours!"

"You poor kid," he said, continuing to walk her about. "You poor kid!"

"H—how'd you find me?" she asked painfully through her cracked lips. "I thought sure there'd be no way . . ."

"Your notebook," he explained. "I found it in front of your house, where they kidnaped you. I was just a moment too late to rescue you."

"What took you so long?" she asked. "That was at noon."

"I didn't find out there was anything in the book until this evening. I thumbed through it and it looked blank."

"I just bought it at the dime store on the way from the office. I got a mysterious phone call telling me I'd find something interesting at B a r k e r ' s Warehouse—something the Enemy of Crime might like to investigate. So I put the address down in the book so I wouldn't forget it."

ELLSWORTH led the girl now into the outer office. He took her to a chair and she sank into it thankfully.

"You rest a minute," he ordered, "then we'll get out of here. When you're safe, I'll come back and take this place apart—" he paused and added "—if I live!"

Once more a twinge of pain surged through his body. He stiffened and held back a groan.

Marie didn't notice, but was staring at the file cabinets.

"What's in those?" she asked.

"I don't know," Ellsworth answered. "They're locked."

"Break one open," Marie ordered.

Ellsworth went back to the metal door and picked up the crowbar. Coming back, he stuck it into the cabinet with a forceful jab, then pried until the lock snapped. The cabinet flew open, rolling out on its roller-bearings.

Marie hobbled over to his side and pulled a sheaf of papers out of it.

"Light a match," she ordered. "I can't see what's on them."

Ellsworth complied, and held it so she could see. It burned down, but before it went out, Marie was nodding her head in excitement.

"It's here!" she cried. "All the records of the gang that runs crime in the city! We've got all we need now! Light another match so I can see whose name is at the bottom. It's the name of the Big Shot, I'm sure—"

Suddenly the office was flooded by brillliant light, and from behind them came an ominous voice.

"You won't have to light a match to find out who it is," came the voice, "because if you'll kindly turn around with your hands in the air, I'll tell you myself"

Ellsworth whirled, and Marie turned too.

"Burke!" cried Marie incredulously. "You—"

The tall, thin, dark man smiled sardonically, aimed his gun directly at Marie.

"No," he said caustically. "Not me. I'm just a sort of first lieutenant. The real boss is—" he turned part way toward the door behind him.

"Yes," said an acid voice. "I'm the Big Shot, as you so aptly describe me. Frank Dawson, editor of the *Herald,* and leader of the organized crime ring that controls this city. *And I don't think the introduction is going to do either of you any good!"*

Marie stared incredulously at her employer, who stood dramatically in the doorway at the top of the stairway that led from the warehouse below.

MOVING so fast that Burke was startled into an instant's indecision by his action, Ellsworth whirled and shoved Marie back into the room where she'd been imprisoned. He slammed the door shut, ignoring the bullets that thudded into his back from Burke's pistol. Then, eyes narrowed and lips tight, he turned to face the two arch criminals.

"The Enemy of Crime strikes again!" he rasped at them. "You've picked the wrong weapons. I am impervious to bullets."

He hurled himself forward.

Crashing into Burke like a battering ram, he reached the door and yanked Dawson into the room. Then, barring the exit, he grinned at them.

"Come on, you two," he said. "I'm not a boxer, but I can take all you two can give me. I've got a tough skin . . . and after all, it doesn't matter *now."*

And for the next five minutes Daniel Ovid Ellsworth came into his own. When he had finished, two badly battered criminals lay in a heap on the floor, begging for mercy from battered, bleeding lips.

At the cessation of the bedlam that filled the office, Marie poked a cautious head from her concealment, then came out.

"Oh, Danny," she breathed. "You're marvelous!"

He stood proudly erect, then suddenly went pale. He doubled over in a new surge of agony, almost unbearable this time.

She leaped forward.

"Dan!" she said sharply. "What's the matter? Oh please tell me! What is it?"

He groaned in the agony that he could no longer conceal.

"Appendicitis!" he said between painful gasps. "I've got appendicitis, and I'm doomed to die. I can't be operated on—"

Marie's eyes narrowed and she stepped up to him. She laid a hand against his brow. Her lips tightened.

"Where does it hurt?" she asked.

He rubbed his midrif.

"I've got the awfulest pain right here," he moaned. "A sort of gnawing pain that never stops—"

"Doe," she said suddenly, sharply, "when did you eat last?"

He stared at her blankly.

"Eat? Why—at breakfast. I—missed lunch on account of the bank robbery, and I didn't have any dinner because I was on the way here—"

She put her hands on her hips.

"Daniel Ovid Ellsworth," she announced impatiently. "You haven't got any more appendicitis than I have. You haven't got a trace of fever, and besides appendicitis pains don't occur in the middle of your stomach. The only thing that's wrong with you is *you're just plain hungry, and you've got a wonderful imagination!"*

He gasped.

"Hungry!"

"Yes," she said tightly. *"Hungry!"*

HE sank down into a chair.

"Oh," he said weakly. "I thought—"

Suddenly he stood up again.

"There's something else too," he said, his face growing red. "I think it hurts worse than the hunger."

"What's that?" she asked.

He reached out, drew her to him, and pressed his lips to hers—as closely as his invulnerability would allow.

"I'm in love with you," he said passionately.

Suddenly a rhapsody of electrical energy played about them, and for a single instant Marie felt her body drawn irresistibly to his with a force that drove the breath from her lungs. Then the force was gone.

Startled, Ellsworth released her.

"Marie!" he gasped. "It's gone. I'm not invincible any more. I *felt* that kiss!"

Marie drew in a shuddering breath of air.

"*You* felt it!" she panted. "Daniel Ovid Ellsworth, don't *ever* kiss me that way again. A girl can take just so much—"

He was staring at her as though he didn't see her.

"Amazing," he was muttering. "The energy of emotion, generated in my body by—by whatever it is that did it—counteracted the magnetism of my skin—the mutual attraction of the sexes—neutralizing . . ."

"Stop!" she cried suddenly. "I think I prefer the kissing to the science—that's just *too* much for anybody—especially a girl in love!"

Once more she threw her arms around his neck, and this time there was no electrical energy—but there seemed to be plenty of magnetic attraction. It was easy to see that John Doe, Crime-Buster, was no longer invincible!

BUCKETS OF BLOOD

SOME idea of the job our heart must perform for us daily is arrived at when we realize that the average person's heart, in one day's time, pumps enough blood to fill an ordinary railroad tank car.

Modern "bloodhounding" is a reality through recent developments in scientific criminology. In completely equipped police laboratories it is now possible to ascertain from bloodstains—the science is called serology—the complete picture of the origin of the blood, its identity, and the manner in which it was probably spilled.

OH, RATS!

EVERY few years in Norway, field mice become so greatly increased in number that they come down from their mountain habitats and swarm through the towns and villages in a mighty migration. On their vast trek many of them die along the route, but the majority finally reach the sea, their self-appointed destination. Then they react as though some Pied Piper stepped forth to blow hypnotic notes, and swarm into the sea, swimming endlessly outward until they drown. Science has not yet been able to explain this mysterious pilgrimage.

SURVIVORS FROM 9000 B.C.

(Continued from page 45)

She shook her head. "It swims faster than anything in the ocean. No, Don King, we cannot run faster than it can."

"Kra—*kor* . . ." The cry came again. It was closer now, the splashes louder.

King looked helplessly around them. He had possibly two shots remaining in his gun. And he knew, from previous experience, that no pistol slug would harm that monstrous sea beast.

Sonthia stood up.

"I am sorry, Don King," she said, "that it has to end like this. But Dor Diavo has won. Nothing can help us here, not even the Invisible Ones."

"I'm sorry, too, Sonthia," King said. His mind was racing, seeking a way to escape. Sonthia might make them invisible, but even invisibility would not keep them from drowning. They might turn the launch and attempt to ram the coming monster, but he knew, from the way it had held the sailing ship, that the launch would not damage it. They could not even turn and attempt to reach the shore. They hadn't a chance.

"What is that thing?" he said to Sonthia, as the cry came again.

"It—I do not know how to explain it," she answered. "Dor Diavo invented it."

"What's that?" King demanded. "Dor Diavo invented it. Then it isn't alive?"

"No. It is made out of metal and therefore cannot be alive. It is like—what do you say?—it is like a robot. It is a-thing-not-alive but with the ability to understand and obey orders."

The sea beast was a robot! It wasn't flesh and blood. It was a cleverly constructed imitation of a gigantic octopus, with steel tentacles. No doubt it was powered the same way the launches were.

"Stop the launch!" King said.

His two companions stared at him.

"Y—you mean, kick it wide open, don't you, Boss? Y—you don't mean to stop it! What we want is to go faster," Markham quavered.

"I said to stop it and I meant what I said."

"B—but we'll only die quicker," Sonthia wailed. "Why should we stop the boat? What are you going to do?"

King told them his plan.

"It's our only chance," he said desperately. "It's got to work. If it doesn't we'll die a few minutes quicker, but we're going to die anyhow. Stop the launch."

Sonthia cut the controls. The roar of the engine died into silence. The launch wallowed in the long sea swell.

"Kra—*kor* . . ."

There was now in its call the same note that sounds in the bugling of the hound hot on the scent of fleeing prey.

"Boss, I hope you know what you're doin'," Markham said.

"So do I," King said. "But if I don't, it's been nice knowing you, Joe. I might mention that I never hope to meet a braver man."

"T—thanks, Boss."

THE black bulk of the robot was now visible in the water, the elongated flattish body resembling the hull of a submarine. The great tentacles were sending up tremendous splashes as they beat the surface of the sea.

"Here goes nothing," King thought. He was surprised to find that he was completely calm. He held up his arm. His fingers were steady, his hand as

solid as a rock. His one wish was that he had a cigarette.

"Kra—*kor* . . ." the screaming note came.

The tip of a tentacle came up out of the water, fingering through the air. The monster was upon them.

"Down in the bottom of the boat," King hissed. "Stay out of the way of those tentacles."

He knew only too well the tremendous strength that reposed in those steel cables.

At his order Sonthia and Markham dropped to the bottom of the launch. King threw himself down beside them.

Tremendous splashes sounded as the robot came up to the boat. Tentacles came over the edge of the launch, circled the hull of the stout little vessel, almost lifted it out of the water.

King was holding his breath. Would those tentacles finger them out, tear them to pieces before he had a chance to try his plan? This was the moment of greatest danger.

The tentacles did not come down into the bottom of the launch!

King breathed easier.

"Kra—*kor,*" the robot called.

It did not try to move. It merely held the launch and waited for the power boat that was coming, the boat that contained Dor Diavo and his men.

King rose on one knee.

"Luck, Boss," Joe Markham whispered.

"God go with you," Sonthia added.

King stood up. He was ready to drop back if a tentacle moved. But the steel cables remained quiet. Across the water he heard the throb of the approaching power boat.

"It has them!" he heard Dor Diavo exclaim. There was jubilance in his voice, and a gloating note that sent shivers of horrer down King's spine.

Beside the boat he could see the black hulk of the body of the robot floating in the water. Slowly, cautiously, King drew himself up to the rail. With a single motion he leaped overboard, landing directly on top of the robot.

"Fish Catcher," he said. "You have caught the wrong fish. This is not the fish you were told to catch. The one you want is there, coming toward you." He pointed toward the approaching boat.

That was King's plan. This sea monster was a robot. It possessed a rudimentary intelligence, enough to enable it to obey orders. And if King had judged Dor Diavo correctly, that wily ruler had constructed the robot so it would obey him and no one else. It would react to Dor Diavo's voice, to his commands, and to no other. The ruler would have been extremely unlikely to construct the robot so it would obey anyone else, because then it might have been used against him.

But Don King was the reincarnation of Dor Diavo. In voice, appearance, weight, and build, they were so nearly identical that it was almost impossible to tell the difference between them.

Would the robot be able to tell the difference?

Would it obey King as readily as it obeyed Dor Diavo?

THE creature gurgled horribly. It did not move. It did not obey him. It seemed to protest, and its cry sounded subdued and doubtful.

"Fish catcher!" King snarled. "You have caught the wrong fish. The other fish is the one you want."

"Kra—kor." The thing answered.

King's heart was up in his mouth. Was the creature going to obey him?

Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw the launch carrying Dor Diavo loom in sight.

"Fish Catcher!" King raged. "There is the fish you are to catch. I order you to catch it. Obey me!"

He stamped on the metal body.

The thing croaked sullenly. One tentacle released the launch. But the other tentacles retained their grip.

"Obey me!" King snarled. He was for the first time in the grip of panic. His calm was gone. And now his voice contained the same harsh overtones there were in the voice of the Atlantan ruler.

And the robot obeyed him!

Reluctantly its tentacles relaxed their hold on the launch. Splashing in the sea, it started toward the approaching boat.

Dor Diavo saw it coming. He must also have glimpsed the man who clung precariously to the black hull. He shrilled a command at the man who was steering the boat. The launch swerved abruptly.

"Catch that fish!" King shouted.

The launch was close, so close it could not turn and dart completely away. A tentacle reached out and grabbed it. Another tentacle fingered through the air. A scream of mad pain split the night.

King never afterward clearly remembered what happened next. He was too busy trying to hold on to the slippery hull of the sea-going robot to watch what took place. He caught a glimpse of a mass of tentacles folding in around the launch. He heard wild screams of fear. He heard the screams choke off into horrible, gulping silence.

If Dor Diavo had had the presence of mind to order his men to lie quiet in the bottom of the boat, the Atlantans might have escaped. The robot would not have harmed them if they had been quiet. But when the first tentacle came fingering into the launch, Dor Diavo struck at it.

The blow, or perhaps the unexpected resistance, seemed to rouse a latent fury in the robot. It had been constructed to crush all resistance, to crush the life from anything that floundered and tried to escape. Here were floundering men. Here were men trying to escape. It had not been constructed to distinguish between men and its normal prey.

King saw it lift the launch into the air. With a crack that could have been heard for miles, it smashed the boat against the surface of the sea. It jerked the launch into the air again, twisted it, spun it, literally tore it into pieces.

Then it picked out of those pieces the one thing that resisted yet—a man. Dor Diavo! One tentacle seized him, lifted him high into the air. He beat at the ropy metal arm with his fists, beat hopelessly. Another tentacle came up toward him. The two caught him. One wrapped itself around his neck, the other around his feet. They pulled in different directions.

Dor Diavo's scream rasped into silence forever.

The sight sickened King. He knew Dor Diavo deserved exactly what he had received but he was still sick.

"Return to shore, Fish Catcher," he gasped.

The robot obeyed him. He heard the soft throbbing of a launch following them. Markham's anxious voice called out to him.

"We're going back to shore," King called. "Follow quietly at a distance so you don't attract the attention of this thing."

He rode the mechanical monster back to shore.

"THERE will be no resistance," Sonthia said. "Without a leader, the guards will not oppose you. Instead they will welcome you, for they had

little liking for Dor Diavo either."

The three stood on the shore near the opening that led into the cavern of the Atlantans. Soon they would enter that cavern.

In the east the sun was rising, its rays glinting across the surface of the slowly heaving sea.

"For my—our people a new day is dawning," the girl continued. "We shall be free again, free to live as we choose. And the Invisible Ones can now come out of hiding and teach us the wisdom of the past. For us it will be a new world. And we owe it to you, Don King."

"You don't owe me anything, Sonthia," he said. "I did what I could. Fortunately it was enough."

"Nothing?" the girl queried. "I owe you nothing?"

He looked at her. There was a tremulous smile in her eyes."

"I take that back," he said. "You do owe me something. I'm going to start collecting on it right now."

He kissed her.

"I'm going to continue collecting the rest of my life," he finished.

"What I want to know," Joe Markham interrupted, "is what was that metal octopus? What was it built for?"

"It was designed to catch whales," King said. "That was why it grabbed our ship and held on. Its cry, 'Kra—kor' means 'whale'. That's all it was —a fish catcher, a whale trap."

"Well, I'm damned," Markham said. "Why didn't I think that out for myself?"

Together, as the sun rose, the three of them entered the launch, entered the hole that opened into the cavern where the Atlantans waited, entered into their kingdom.

Carson of Venus Fights Again!

ONCE more Carson Napier roams the planet Venus, fighting to save himself and the lovely Duare from the Fishmen of Mypos. But victory seems never to be won on Venus, especially when the fighting leads toward a mysterious woman . . . a woman so beautiful that she makes other women appear as beasts! Who was she? What would Carson and Duare discover when they finally faced her? What was the strange secret of the Venus girl who "remembered Brooklyn."

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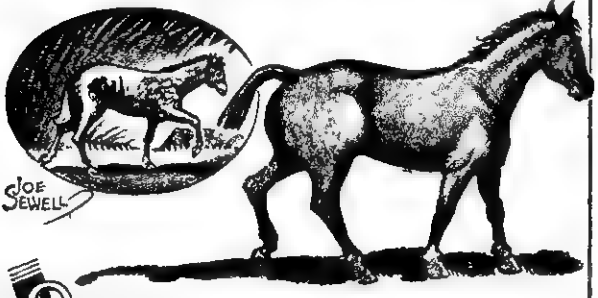
Scientific

WHAT CAUSES **HUMAN GIANTS**? SCIENCE SAYS THE TINY **PITUITARY GLAND** IS TO BLAME. BUT WHAT CAUSES IT TO RUN AMOK, CAUSE SUCH ABNORMAL GROWTH?

TADPOLES, TREATED WITH **THYROID EXTRACT** CAN BE TRANSFORMED INTO PERFECT FROGS NO BIGGER THAN FLIES!



OUR **MODERN HORSE** WAS ONCE A TINY, **THREE-TOED CREATURE** NO LARGER THAN A DOG. WHAT MADE THAT SMALL ANIMAL GROW TO ITS PRESENT SIZE?

MOST **AMAZING** SIGHT IN THE WORLD IS THE **GIANT SEQUOIA** OF **CALIFORNIA**. WHAT POWER CAUSES THESE MEMBERS OF THE PLANT WORLD TO GROW TO THE INCREDIBLE HEIGHT OF **300** FEET?

Mysteries

By JOSEPH J. MILLARD

Why are some things big and some things small? What makes a giant? What strange force is it that commands: "Let this be big and this small?"

ONE of the mysteries that science in all its branches is seeking to solve is the mystery of size. Why are some things immensely large while others, possessing apparently similar characteristics and living in apparently similar surroundings, are infinitely tiny by comparison? There is no known reason that applies equally to the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms or to all representatives of any one group. Yet there ought to be, by all the laws of life.

Science has made some progress in studying differences in size between different human beings. In the case of both man and animals, the mysterious ductless glands have proven to be the cause of over-development or under-development from a standpoint of size. However, that field alone produces fresh mysteries with every discovery so so that progress seems to be backward rather than forward with the increase in discoveries.

Minute quantities of thyroid extract fed to tadpoles has caused them to "grow up" so rapidly that they become perfectly formed frogs no bigger than flies. Giantism and acromegaly, the abnormal growth of separate parts of the body, have been traced to the pituitary gland. In the average man, this gland weighs only about half a gram. In the body of the famouse Irish Giant who was eight feet four inches tall when he died at the age of twenty-two, was found a pituitary as large as a hen's egg.

Extracts of pituitary have been used in laboratories to raise gigantic rats and other test animals. Later, when used on under-developed humans, astonishing results were obtained. One boy grew eight and a half inches in twenty-one months. It is claimed now that a whole race of giants could be created with pituitary injections but the substance is too costly to produce in sufficient quantities.

BUT, despite this progress, science is forced to shake its head when asked why there are races of people on earth today who are either giants or pygmies. And science is still pondering the amazing discovery that the average height of human beings increases and decreases in cycles. We have been living through a cycle of increasing size, with each generation averaging taller than the one before. Now there is evidence that a peak has been reached and succeeding generations may again be smaller.

The ancestor of the modern horse was a perfectly-formed little creature no larger than a small dog. Why did that tiny three-toed midget expand into the massive, powerful work animal of today while, during almost the same period, the mammoth lizards of the past were degenerating into their tiny replicas of today? The answer to that question would give science a vast springboard of knowledge with which to plunge into the solution of many problems.

But mankind by no means furnishes the major puzzles about size. The plant world offers the greatest mysteries of all and one of them is the common banana. Here size and speed combine to make the tree a real phenomenon. Within a few months, the first shoots of a growing plant have leaped to a height of from fifteen to twenty feet, with a base diameter of a foot. If a banana tree is cut, a new sprout frequently appears within fifteen to twenty minutes and by the following day is several feet in height.

The largest living things on earth are plants. The great Sequoias of California reach heights of nearly three hundred feet, but they have rivals in the Mexican Cypresses that, while not so high, reach a circumference of well over a hundred and twenty feet. Banyans and Baobab trees, however, exceed that many times over.

Our flower gardens are rich with the colors of such tiny and delicate plants as violets, verbenas, heliotrope and pansies. Yet in the tropics, these same plants or remarkably close relatives grow to heights of sixty feet or more, with stems four or five feet in diameter and giant blossoms to match.

The tropics produce many plant giants. Our common pickerel-weeds, for example, often grow to heights of ten feet with stalks of flowers five feet in length. A relative of the calla lily produces a very similar blossom whose spathe is six to eight feet long while a species of water lily has leaves so huge that children use them for boats and go sailing on them.

Our common lawn grass has a blood brother in the bamboo trees that are similar in almost every respect except size. A *St. John's Wort,* a tiny herb

that never exceeds a foot in size in this country, was taken to New Zealand for a garden. Here, the tiny herb suddenly shot up with new vigor until it became a tree, forty feet high and still growing.

ONE of the strangest spots on earth, the Kaetuerk Plateau in British Guiana, offers some amazing riddles of size. Here are plants found no where else on earth, but in addition there are common plants grown to immense size. Tiny *maidenhair ferns* and *sundews* reach unbelievable growths while a species of lily found there has leaves eight feet in length.

These lilies are curious in another feature besides their growth. At the base of each plant, the leaves close to form a small container for moisture and in that miniature aquarium are tiny golden frogs and silver fish that have never been seen anywhere else on earth. Again the riddle of size has appeared.

But conversely, it is strange that almost all the edible cereals that we depend on today for food showed an opposite development. Corn, wheat, oats and other grains when originally discovered in their wild state and used for food, were small and sickly. It is only the result of years of breeding and cultivation that has produced the huge stalks of grain and giant ears of corn we know so well today. Again we are face to face with the mystery of why some living things grow larger while others grow smaller.

The insect world, too, has more than a casual share of size marvels. From its vast ranks of over half a million species have come such fossil wonders as flying cockroaches of gigantic size, dragon flies with a wing spread of two and a half feet and other massive forebears of the tiny pests of today. There are giant flies and tiny flies of the same family, too small to be seen in flight by the naked eye.

One of the size-wonders of the insect world is that of ants where the largest species reach a length of more than two inches. Yet it is the very small termite that builds the massive homes which may reach twenty-five feet in height.

In the physical world, we have the puzzle of crystals that range from microscopic size up to the giant quartz and spar crystals. There is also the puzzle of the spectrum itself where, apparently, the size of radiated waves determines whether the result is to be visible light, heat, radio or some newer and more powerful wave like the gamma rays or the cosmic rays from outer space.

THE field of astrophysics ponders over its giant stars and dwarf stars. The chemical laboratory adds its puzzle with massive molecules of almost microscopic size and others infinitely tiny. The physics laboratories are finding deutrons, neutrons, protons, photons of varied and astonishing weights and sizes whose mysteries may hold the mystery of creation. The belief that an element heavier than Uranium could not exist has at last been shattered with the creation of two heavier elements. We may, in time, be forced to accept Eddington's calculation that a hundred and thirty-six different elements were theoretically possible.

To skip from the physical world back to living forms, we come upon a new mystery resulting from the comparatively new science of genetics. When research had finally established the *gene* as the carrier of each unit character in the chromosome, no microscope was powerful enough to actually see such a *gene*. For a long time, science studied *genes* and worked miracles with them without ever actually seeing one.

Probably no true *gene* has yet been seen, but another miracle of size made the study much easier. It was found that, for some strange reason, the saliva of the Drosophila larvae contained genuine chromosomes that were almost seventy times larger than the chromosomes found in their egg cells. By working with these newly discovered giants, researchers found queer rings that seem to possess the attributes of the unseen *genes*. Maybe they are true *genes*, grown to giant size along with their mysterious chromosome.

The cases of unexpected and unexplainable giants and dwarfs can be multiplied almost indefinitely, but their fundamental causes are still puzzles. Science can produce giants and dwarfs and science can prevent them, in many cases, but exactly what queer combination of stimuli and circumstances bring them about are, in most cases, still a mystery.

But as the research goes on, the possibility becomes more clear that some day there will be races of super-men, super-plants and super-animals on earth, produced by a science that has learned the secret of size. And on that same future earth, there may be also other living beings reduced to tinier size than their present norm to make some feature of life more fruitful.

LET'S QUOTE

BETTY HARDWICK put both hands on Malone's shoulders.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I really mean it. If we had known, we wouldn't have tried to get you to take the job, would we, Pete?"

She looked over his shoulder at her companion. Malone saw her eyes widen with incomprehensible fright. He heard her scream. The scream was choked off. Something thudded against the back of his skull. He knew he was falling and that the girl was trying to hold him up. Then he didn't know anything.

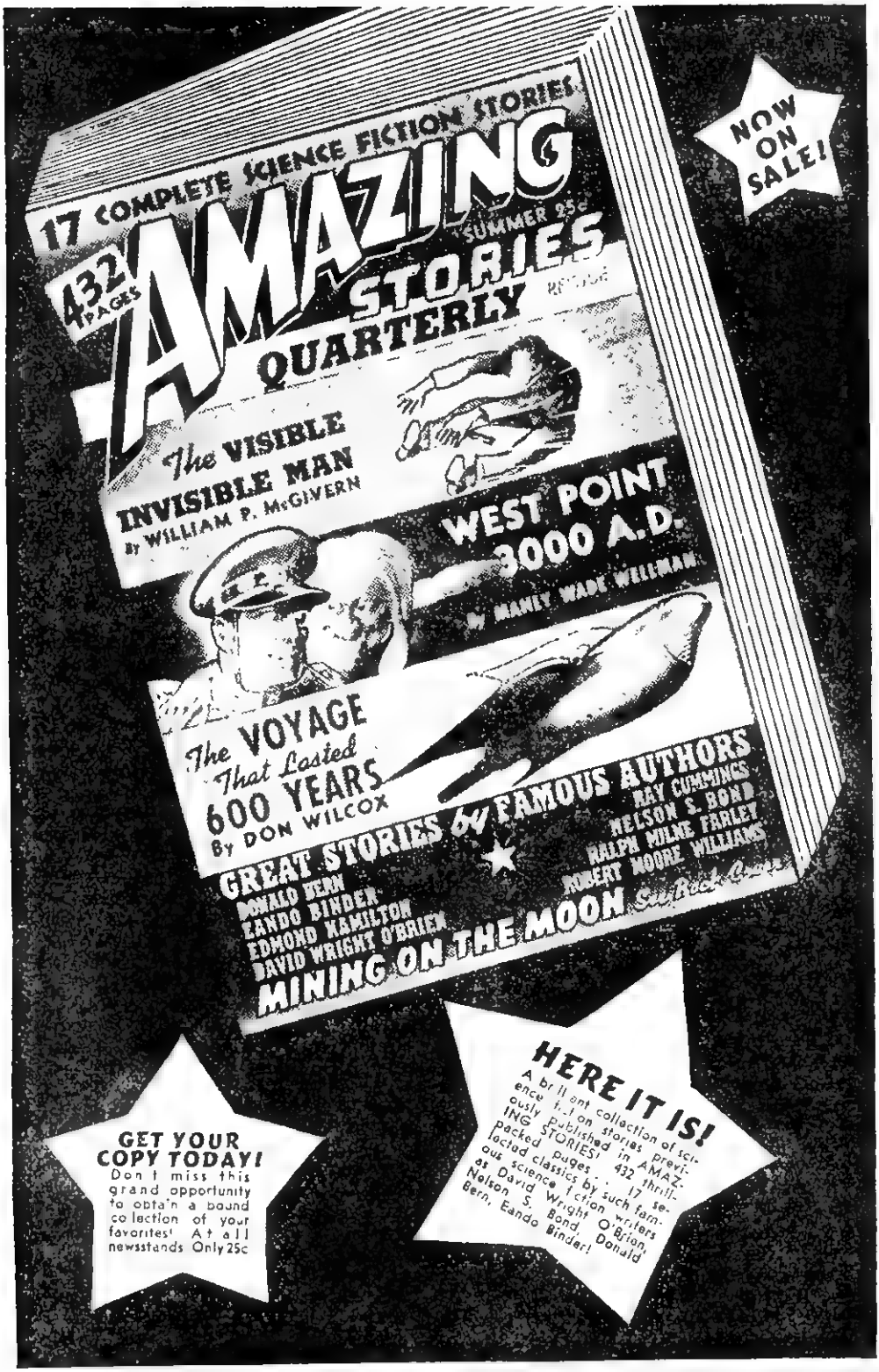
"The Boss said we got to get a radio op," Pete Grover said defensively, slipping the blackjack with which he had struck Malone back into his pocket. "The Boss means what he says, so space nutty or not, we gotta take him along, don't we?"

That's just a few paragraphs from a great story by

Robert Moore Williams

YOU OUGHT TO BE DEAD

Just one of six grand stories in the big August issue.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Meet the Authors

IN quite undramatic fashion, I began by being born. Place, Los Angeles, California. Date, December 7, so few years ago that darned little has had time to happen. Ancestry, Scots-English I weighed ten pounds, had black hair, and a strident personality, especially during the wee sma' hours.

The next few years are somewhat hazy, except that I was very naughty and had an uncanny faculty for imitating dialect The family was never quite sure whether it had hatched out a Chinese cook or an Italian fruit man.

LEIGH BRACKETT

At an early age I discovered books. It was a sad day for the family. It's a mournful tradition with us that if you want to get me out of a book, you've got to use a good-sized percussion cap

Presently I was put into a small school in Santa Monica. I may say, with a pardonable blush, that I was the second worst brat on the campus. The worst one had a head start—she was a year older.

This I call my beach-combing period. I lived at the shore, acquired an indelible tan and a mop of straw-colored hair—the black fuzz I started out with having apparently made a mistake. I didn't grow scales and gills, but the fish all called me by my first name.

By this time several alarming characteristics had appeared in me. I was crazy over dogs. I'd have had a dozen or so, if the family hadn't sternly refused to cooperate. I had a nice taste in Elizabethan oaths, garnered from pirate stories I wavered between four desperate alternatives: whether to be a smuggler like Jim Davis, a pirate like Blackbeard, an all-round daredevil like Douglas Fairbanks, who was my idol, or just to settle for cowboys'n'Indians.

And I discovered "imaginative fiction"

There was apprehensive shaking of heads among the female relations Attempts were made to save me But it was too late. I devoured Burroughs, Haggard, Balmer and Wylie, Doyle's unforgettable "Maracott Deep," Jules Verne Yes, boys and girls. I was hooked Completely and utterly.

In the meantime, I flunked Latin and algebra, acted in some school plays, fought the neighbor's boy, and made several unsuccessful attempts to go to Mars à la John Carter

Then we went East, and the Fateful Day arrived

It dawned quite simply. The sun shone, the little birds were doing their stuff, all was quiet and serene I got out of bed . . .

There was a muffled thunder of psychic drums. Boston quaked to its foundations. And I said to myself:

"Brackett, you're thirteen. Time you thought about things. The days of piracy are over, smuggling has degenerated into boot-legging, and cowboy-ing seems to have lost its siren charm. What's it to be, the Life Work?"

Brackett struggled with this for a long time —five minutes at least. And then,

"I have it! You get good marks in Eng. Lit. You read incessantly. Composition is a snap Writing is easy In fact, it's so easy it'll be almost a pity to take money for it.

"Brackett, your future is assured. You will be a writer."

Uh huh Gruesome, isn't it? My only excuse is that I was young, and no one had ever kicked me very hard

I wrote a novel, an intensely dramatic problem piece I wrote short stories. Then two more novels

They made a horrible stench, burning. My one consolation is that I wrote them in longhand, which in my case is practically illegible, and I

(Concluded on page 143)

Science Quiz

The following quiz has been prepared as a pleasant means of testing your knowledge of science and science fiction. We offer it solely for the pleasure it gives you, and with the hope that it will provide you with many bits of information that will help you to enjoy the stories in this magazine. Give yourself a rating for each question as indicated. If you rank above 50% you are better than average. If you rank 60% you are one of the Quiz Kids. If you rank over 70%, well, well! And well!

DON'T FALL DOWN ON THIS

(score 20 on this one, but no points if you can't tell why)

Four living organisms fall down a mine shaft 400 feet deep. Each will land differently, and with different results. After the names of the organisms, we have placed the results—scrambled. Rearrange them to fit.

(1) a mine mule	(a) will be dazed but unhurt.
(2) a mouse	(b) will be killed and badly mangled.
(3) a man	(c) will be splattered completely, driving a hole in the bottom of the shaft.
(4) a cat	(d) will be killed, but not badly mangled.

BIG ENOUGH

(give yourself 5 points for each right)

Select one word in each of these.

(a) The largest organisms are—
animals, minerals, vegetables

(b) Largest invertebrates are—
jellyfish, mollusks, starfish

(c) Largest animals ever in existence are—
dinosaurs, hippos, whales

TRUE OR FALSE?

(score 5 points each)

(a) Frogs have grown as large as dogs.

(b) Giant squids have weighed as much as eight tons.

(c) The largest ant colonies possess over 3,000,000 citizens.

(d) Some whales have exceeded 100 tons in weight.

(e) Jellyfish have been known to weigh as much as horses.

(f) The nearest star to the earth is 30,000 billion miles away.

WHAT'S IN IT?

(give yourself 2 points each for these)

Following are raw materials which comprise part of certain products. After each material we have named two products. Select the right one in each instance.

(a) RATTAN	Pepper, Walking Sticks
(b) MICA	Lantern Slides, Sails
(c) SULPHUR	Calcimine, Gunpowder
(d) GUTTA PERCHA	Light Bulbs, Insulation
(e) GYPSUM	Pillows, Plaster Paris
(f) FLAX	Castor Oil, Linens
(g) GRAPHITE	Shoes, Pencils
(h) RAFFIA	Baskets, Magnets
(i) KAOLIN	Porcelain, Whisky
(j) VITRIOL	Explosives, Gelatin
(k) RESIN	Erasers, Shellac
(l) HOOFS	Rope, Glue
(m) CINCHONA	Quinine, Furniture Polish
(n) CAMPHOR	Pipes, Celluloid
(o) DEXTROSE	Lathing, Candy

OBSERVING IS A SCIENCE

(precisely 2½ points each is what these are worth)

The eyes are not always the infallible instruments we think they are. Some of us, through lack of knowing how to use them, are blind. See if you are.

(a) Any person who's played cards now and then should know which Jacks are one-eyed. Okay, which?

(b) Every jewelry store usually has a painted clock for an advertisement. Any goof knows to what time the hands usually point. Yeah, what time?

MISSING WORD

Fill in the missing word in each of the following sentences. Count two points for each correct answer. Twenty, of course, is perfect.

(1) Absolute zero is said to exist at ..... degrees.

(2) The largest planet in our solar system is .....

(3) The smallest is .....

(4) If the body temperature falls below ..... life is seriously threatened.

(5) The highest temperature at which life is possible is .....

(6) The amount of body heat produced depends on the basal .....

(7) H. Cavendish was an eminent .....

(8) Pi, the mathematical expression is approximately .....

(9) To provide for keeping standard time at sea the surface of the globe is conceived to be divided into ..... zones

(10) The origin of species and the theory of evolution was first advanced by .....

(Answers on page 144)

DISCUSSIONS

AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

RATINGS

Sirs:

My rating of the April issue:

(1) Big Man.
(2) King Arthur's Knight in a Yankee Court.
(3) Priestess of the Sleeping Death.
(4) Lords of the Underworld.
(5) Invisible Raiders of Venus.
(6) Killer's Turnabout.

I didn't think so much of St. John's front cover but the back cover was splendid.

More stories by O'Brien please, he's good.

George Klumph,
2018 Dilworth Rd. W.,
Charlotte, N. C.

PHONEY

Sirs:

Just a short comment anent anniversary issue.

It was truly *great* for once. Back cover superb, to say the least. Front cover not up to the par of St. John.

Stories fine with Wilcox very, very good in both stories. Millard and Steber did a fine job with an old plot, in collaboration.

Fantastic Adventures was also swell, but who is Magarian? Sounds like a phoney to me, though his illustration was better than any other. More Wilcox fantasy!

I'd like to hear from all East Bay fans who are interested in joining a successful club.

Joe J. Fortier,
1836 39th Ave.,
Oakland, Calif.

No, Magarian isn't a phoney. He's a swell new artist and you'll see a lot of him. How about his work in this issue?—Ed.

INDIAN SECRET REVEALED!

Sirs:

I read your story, "Lords of the Underworld." How you know this? I know because I Indian. I old now, live with son. He see story and buy because I tell him when he papoose. Long time old people tell me old, old Indian story. How you know this secret of Indians?

Big Tree,
Indianville,
Zapoteck, Mex.

Well, Big Tree, AMAZING STORIES *prides itself on the accuracy and authenticity of its stories, and since this story was written by a famous archeologist and researcher into old races of the southwest, of South America, and of the south seas, it shouldn't be unusual for him to know a few of the redman's secrets. As you can see, he used them very effectively in his story. Thus, the story your forefathers told you, and which you passed on to your son, was also told to Mr. Hansen, and incorporated into his narrative. There is much in the story that has been hitherto unknown to the white race in general, and we have still more material coming up by this recognized authority. We appreciate your letter, and we hope this explains to you how we know so much about tribal secrets. Perhaps, if you care to forward us your address (we are in doubt about our interpretation of the one given above), we will give it to Mr. Hansen, and perhaps one day he will call upon you personally and tell you more of his knowledge of your race. As for ourselves, we feel rather proud of your letter, which gives us still further right to our title,* AMAZING STORIES*!—Ed.*

COLOSSAL!

Sirs:

Colossal!! You outdid yourself, for your birthday any way. There were so many good stories that it was hard to give them the correct rating, but I tried and this is what I got:

(1) *The Lost Race Comes Back.* Wilcox gets better and better.
(2) A tie between *The Lone Wolf of Space* and *The Secret of the Lost Planet.*
(3) Another tie!! *Adam Link Faces a Revolt* and *The Iron Men of Super City.*
(4) *The Fate of Asterold 13.*
(5) *Return of the Space Hawk.*
(6) *Dictagraphs of Death.* Is Costello new?
(7) *The Strange Adventure of Victor MacLeish.*
(8) *The Man Who Forgot.*
(9) *Rocky Gordon's Billion-Dollar Trap.*

If Wilcox can write a story like *The Lost Race Comes Back* in forty days, what could he do if you gave him more time? The return of Ben Gleed was well received by yours truly; lets have more of him. How about having the super city at war.

Couldn't Adam Link be successful in one of his ventures? Maybe he would if he wouldn't look down on humans as being so much more ignorant than the suuuppppper brained robots.

It's a good thing old man Gernsback had his brain storm, else what would yours truly and

all the other AMAZING fans have to rave about (and crab about).

I should thank you for introducing me to Burroughs. After reading The Giant I went to work (or play) and read all his SF stories I could get hold of; and there were quite a few.

Harlan Campbell,
618 Roberts,
Reno, Nevada

You'll see what Wilcox can do if we give him more time! We're giving him all the time he wants on a new novel which will appear in serial form soon. It's called "Disciples of Destiny," and is just about the finest fantasy ever written, in our opinion. Not even Taine's "White Lily" can touch it. And Ben Gleed will be back again too. As for Adam Link, he's on our desk again, and we hope he'll be successful soon in a venture—he deserves it.—Ed

JUST A COMMENT

Sirs:

Just a comment on the special anniversary issue To say the least, it was all I could expect from you.

Cover was swell, but I thought you would cut out some of the gab on the front. St. John is best for John Carter. Paul was his usual self.

1. *The Lost Race Comes Back* title too long. All of yours are.
2. *Return of the Space Hawk*—fine old type of space tale.
3. *Adam Link Faces a Revolt*—I await the next "Little People."
4. *Lone Wolf of Space.*
5. *Iron Men of Super City.*
6. *Fate of Asteroid 13*—McGivern's going places.

Best artists are: Krupa—one of the best in the business; too bad you have an option on him.

Magarian—Don't let him go. Wow! What a man.

Fuqua Lousy.

McCauley—Masterful.

Comments—Best issue yet is the Special Interplanetary Issue of last year; I eagerly await a second, with Krupa as artist supreme.

Glad to see FA coming out monthly. By the way, how about an AS cover by the mighty McCauley?

Finally, how does one go about obtaining back issues?

H. K. Pruyn,
22 Ft. Amherst Rd.
Glens Falls, N Y.

How can you title a story in much less than four or five words? One-word titles are rare because they hardly give an indication of what the story is about. What would you have called this story? "Return?" or "Last Man?"

There'll be another interplanetary issue soon. We've got some grand yarns on tap for it.

McCauley will undoubtedly do an AMAZING STORIES *cover soon. However, his specialty is fantasy.*

Back issues can be obtained (but not prior to April, 1938) from our circulation department.—Ed.

A BRIDGE "CROSSES" US!

Sirs:

I've been neglecting AMAZING lately, but when you went to the trouble of assembling your super issue, I decided that I could at least read the thing. I've done so, and personally I'd gladly trade the whole mess for one good story.

So far as quantity goes, you really gave us something, but without exception the stories are your usual grade of flashing ray-gun adventure tales.

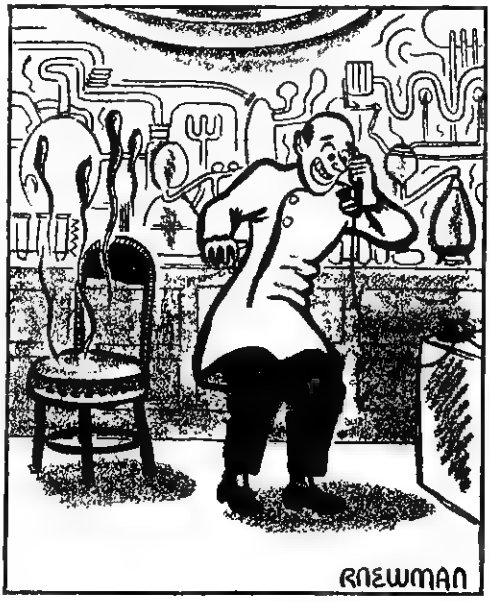
Don Wilcox takes first place with "The Iron Men of Super City," which was a little different, at least. Wilcox's other story rates second, even if he does speed up the process of evolution enormously and use giant insects.

"The Strange Adventure of Victor MacLiesh," takes third place, although it should have been in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. The latest *Adam Link* story gets fourth. "I, Robot" was good, and so were the next two in the series, but lately, Binder's lost interest or is trying for speed, or something. The remaining stories were about uniformly bad, "Dictagraphs of Death" being just about the worst I've ever seen, and I've read some pretty putrid ones!

Since I'm not 9 years old, since I don't think your magazine is swell, and since this isn't my first letter to any magazine, I have grave doubts about this appearing in print.

Lynn Bridges,
7730 Pitt,
Detroit, Mich.

Since we are impartial, and since we print both



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30x5.00-20	2.40	1.05
6.25-17	2.45	1.15
28x6.25-18	2.45	1.15
29x6.25-19	2.45	1.15
30x6.25-20	2.50	1.15
31x6.25-21	2.60	1.15
6.50-17	2.75	1.15
28x6.50-18	2.75	1.18
29x6.50-19	2.75	1.15
6.00-16	2.15	1.45
6.00-17	2.85	1.15
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ADDRESS .....

CITY..... STATE.....

sides of a question, and since we like a little argument, here's your letter in print! We gather, from your likes and dislikes, that you really are a fantasy fan, and not a science fiction fan. And therefore, we fully expect you to write Fantastic Adventures *a letter in which you tell the editor he has a swell book. And you must like Wilcox a lot—ranking him first and second in the same issue as you do!*

As for Binder, maybe you're right. We've asked Mr. Binder to give Adam Link a shot of serum or something. Anyway, we're hoping, and meanwhile why not keep on reading us and noting our constant improvement—because your letter is a challenge we won't let lie.—Ed

HARRISON VERSUS WHITE

Sirs:

I should like to see this letter in print just to answer the letter of the fellow named Harrison in your last issue (which was a swell Anniversary issue by the way).

It starts off in praise of Mr. Burroughs. Mr. Burroughs is pure adventure type, always has been, always will be—but he writes well and so is interesting. He's nice for a while, but he's quite open about the fact that he does not write sf. Witness the fact that all John Carter stories follow the same general plot and action—who is Harrison to talk about O'Brien?

Hok and the Gift of Heaven—nice story and I'll bet all you fellows died laughing at Mr Harrison's cute crack on that story.

Liked *Man Who Lived Next Week* -and so did a few thousand others—but Mr Harrison is unusual and so what?

The Winking Lights of Mars was good, even our critic agreed, but somebody beat us to it. Pray tell, who Mr. Harrison?

Adam Link in the Past—call him "Chain"—oh goody, a pun! Gad the guy grows worse and worse and his humor . . .

I rather imagine Mr. Burroughs doesn't believe in nice gory scenes, sword stabbing, appropriate corpses, mummies, etc., Mr. Harrison? Why the criticism of Wilcox's yarn then? By the by, his new tale was nice and restful after Mr. Carter had ceased his leaping to and fro.

I've read sf for nearly seven years—how long has our honorable Mr. Harrison—and this is my first letter. But I get so darned mad about these cutie pants who grow too big for their britches after two issues, I see red.

Maybe if our big shot can come out of his hole after a little constructive criticism, I'll be glad to engage in a little battle of words with the readers as judge.

Wayne White,
2108 Rosedale Ave.,
Houston, Texas.

Well, Mr. Harrison, here's somebody disagrees, and how! Maybe you'll have something to say in retahation, eh?—Ed

THE JOHN CARTER STORIES

Sirs:

For the benefit of your younger readers (who

are probably your most numerous group) you should tell of the past history of John Carter. He has lived through no less than nine book-length stories, all of which are still in print and available to those who have not already thrilled to his earlier adventures. In case you want to print this letter, the titles of those books are: (in their reading order)

A PRINCESS OF MARS
THE GODS OF MARS
THE WARLORD OF MARS
THUVIA, MAID OF MARS
THE CHESSMEN OF MARS
THE MASTER MIND OF MARS
A FIGHTING MAN OF MARS
SWORDS OF MARS
THE SYNTHETIC MEN OF MARS

All of these, except the last, have recently been brought out in new 75c reprint editions by the Burroughs company at Tarzana, California. The last title is still in the $2.00 edition which is likewise published by the E.R.B. Company.

Any reader who has not obtained copies of these books can do so by sending his order direct to Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc., Tarzana, Calif.

Charles W. Wolfe,
214 Grand Ave,
Las Vegas, New Mexico.

A QUESTION

Sirs:

First of all I want to congratulate you on your anniversary issue. It was the biggest magazine buy in Quality and Quantity I have ever seen. Wilcox's novel was superb and demands a sequel. The Adam Link story was good (as usual). I was glad to see a sequel to "Ben Gleed, King of Speed." I am absolutely in favor of the smaller print unless you cut the magazine's size. I was glad to see all the cartoons and hope that the rest of my suggestions turn out as well. Let's have more humorous stories in AMAZING. The back cover of your anniversary issue was O K, but I can't say the same for the front cover Somehow it just didn't appeal to me. How long before we readers get another swell serial like "Sons of the Deluge"?

Toby Kavanaugh,
227 South Ashland Ave,
Lexington, Kentucky.

We plan to publish a novel by Stanton A. Coblentz, possibly in our September issue, in complete form, although it is long enough to be a serial, which will more than satisfy your call for long yarns of "tall" calibre.—Ed.

THREE LIKES—AND . . .

Sirs:

There are three things which I like about AMAZING: (1) J. Allen St John and Frank R. Paul; (2) Your cartoons; (3) Edgar Rice Burroughs.

I don't like most of your stories. Your interplanetary stories are over-dressed westerns. A few are detective stories

I don't like Adam Link. "I, Robot" and "Adam

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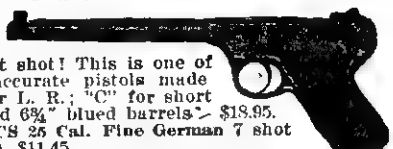

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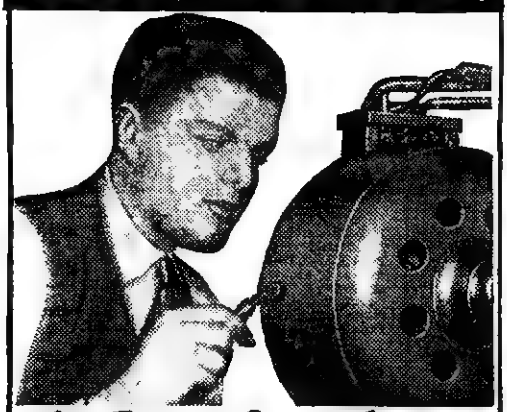

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City *State*

Link in the Past" are the only stories that were interesting.

I suggest that you get stories by Gottesman, Van Vogt, Heinlein, deCamp and P. S. Miller, each of whose worst stories are better than some you are printing now.

A. L. Schwartz,
229 Washington St.,
Dorchester, Mass.

Of the bevy of beauties you mention, only one has ever submitted to AMAZING STORIES. *We believe that you are referring to authors who are unavailable to us because of other commitments. Believe us, we'll certainly buy their best stories when we get a chance to. As for Mr. Miller, we had a letter from him the other day in which he tells of his many pursuits which don't allow for writing fiction at all these days. How about the others? Maybe they aren't writing either?—Ed*

ON A PLATTER!

Sirs:

This letter writing is a little out of my line, especially a letter to the editor of a magazine; but after due thought and consideration I finally made up my mind to (scientifically speaking) shatter the solidified H_2O.

There is only one type of reading matter which I really enjoy, and that is science fiction, among which AMAZING STORIES with its superior grade of story and scientific data tops them all

I have just finished reading your anniversary issue and all the praise in the world should be given you on a star-encrusted platter. Surely, never an array of such outstanding stories have been printed in one issue of any magazine. Far in the lead, in my opinion, was "Adam Link Faces a Revolt." I chose that one because the plot dealt with a subject which I have often tried to imagine as a future possibility Messrs. Binder have portrayed the effects and defects most vividly. It is shown to be a fact that when avarice and greed enter, Utopia can be no more.

I could go on and on throwing bouquets, but I must leave room for just one brick-bat. To wit: The "John Carter" stories in past issues. With all respect to Mr Burroughs' works on both the "Tarzan" and "John Carter" stories, I still fail to see why such a scientifically moded magazine should be cluttered up with such childish nonsense. Of course, this is merely my opinion, and I can see that there are few of the same, but I always have had a tendency to be different.

Exclusive of that one, perhaps uncalled for, criticism I repeat that the magazine is above them all. Whether it is a pulp or a slick it is the stories within the covers which make the magazine what it is.

Hoping for some comment of defense on your part for my one "slam," I am—

Chester L Britt, Psy. Att,
Norwich State Hospital,
Norwich, Conn.

We look askance at your address, and then

decide not to comment. Except to say thanks for your kind words. We'll take 'em as they are. And hope that Burroughs is compensated in your mind by our other stars.—Ed.

CORREX

Sirs:

Even if the author of your Science quiz does not know enough chemistry to know that Silver bromide is *not* magnesia, he should be able to read enough to find out that Zinc chloride is not litharge. Litharge is yellow oxide of lead.

Contracus.

MEET THE AUTHORS

(Concluded from page 136)

think the editors simply stuck rejection slips on them, of necessity, without reading.

We came West again I entered school, and took a course in writing on the side. It did some good, but not much. Besides, I was bitten by the acting bug about this time and spent most of my waking hours in the school auditorium

This eventually resulted in my placing second for dramatic reading in the Festival of Arts and Sciences, and teaching speech and dramatics for a year at an up-coast school.

I taught swimming as well during the summers, and had an idea I might be a physical instructor. But writing had become chronic. I couldn't shake it. I turned out incredibly bad stories in every spare moment.

Now we come to the tragic, soul-searing period inevitable in the life of every struggling artist, the time when he's sure his Muse has deserted him for good. If, indeed, the gal was ever around In nine years I hadn't sold a word. I was beating my head against a wall, with no way over or around. Writing was easy. *Ha!*

Then, just as I was poised on the edge of a cliff, with a rope around my neck, a bottle of poison in one hand and a gun in the other, Fate stepped in. I found a teacher, heaven bless him. I found a writer willing to help. I found an agent, ditto. I decided life wasn't so bad after all

Behold me now, laboring in my garret, which overlooks the city of Los Angeles. I've sold a dozen stories. Not much, but a beginning. And some day, maybe . . .

That just about finishes this uneventful chronicle. If physical statistics are of interest, I'm tallish, fairish, and mildly insane on the subject of beach volley-ball. I still read. I like eating and sleeping, dislike hats and cats, and dream of globe-trotting.

There's just one more thing—a very important thing. I hope you enjoy "No Man's Land . . ." It's the first story I've sold to AMAZING STORIES, but I hope, I do sincerely hope, that it will not be the last.—*Leigh Brackett.*

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THE INVISIBLE MEN OF MARS

By

EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

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QUIZ ANSWERS

(Quiz on page 137)

DON'T FALL DOWN ON THIS ONE

1 — C
2 — A
3 — B
4 — D

Why? the greater the surface, the more air resistance.

BIG ENOUGH

(a) vegetable (b) mollusks (c) whales

TRUE OR FALSE?

(a) True (b) False (c) False (d) True (e) True (f) False

WHAT'S IN IT?

Walking sticks	Baskets
Lantern slides	Porcelain
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Pencils	Celluloid
	Candy

OBSERVING IS A SCIENCE

(a) Hearts and Spades (b) 8:20

MISSING WORD

(1) 270 degrees. (2) Jupiter. (3) Mercury. (4) 86 Deg. F. (5) 110 degrees F. (6) Metabolism. (7) Physicist. (8) 3.14159. (9) 24. (10) Darwin.

CORRESPONDENCE CORNER

Walter Tevis, 13 yrs, 700 Franklin Ave., Lexington, Ky, would like to buy old SF magazines; send list . . . Mrs. Dolores Lapi, 515 82nd St., North Bergen, N. J, wishes to correspond with anyone, anywhere, and will answer all letters immediately . . . Pvt. Samuel Bernstein, 18 yrs., 67th Materiel Squadron, Elgin Field, Valparaiso, Fla., would like pen pals from all over the world between 17 and 19, interested in aviation, baseball and science fiction . . . Louise Holbrook, 71 St. Stephens Ave, Keasbey, N. J., would like to correspond with skating fans and those interested in bowling, photography, stamp collecting and trading stickers from different skating rinks . . . Abraham Oshinsky is interested in contacting amateur astronomers who would like to join the International Astronomical Society . . . Robert Hageman, Jr., 18 yrs., Sanborn, Minn., would like to communicate with those interested in exchanging U. S. and foreign issues (stamp collecting); also will sell back issues of AMAZING STORIES cheap . . . S. M. Ritter, 1160 Simpson St., N. Y. C., has a list of about 30 magazines to trade for 1941 issues . . . Louis Kopeny, 2240 N. Kilpatrick Ave., Chicago, Ill., would like to hear from anyone of either sex about 15 yrs.; preferably from outside Illinois . . . Nat Silberstein, 1826 Trafalgar Pl., Bronx, N. Y., is desirous of buying, swapping and corresponding with "nature" and "pet" fans over 14 yrs. . . . C Hidley, 2541 Aqueduct Ave., N. Y. C., wants to buy perfect, inexpensive pre-1936 magazines; send price lists . . . R. John Gruebner, 2306-N. 40th St., Milwaukee, Wisc., would like to hear from anyone around 14-16 yrs. interested in joining a science fiction club in Milwaukee . . . Jerry Gordon, 288 W. 92nd St., N. Y. C., will sell to highest bidder H G. Wells "The World Set Free"; good condition . . . William E. Shaw, Jr., Route No. 1, Box 266, Rocky Mount, N. C., desires correspondents from all over the world, either sex, any age . . . Everett Robertson, 1140 S. 10th St., Slaton, Tex., would like to obtain the complete "Romance of the Elements" appearing in AMAZING . . . Pvt. Weldon W. Robinson, 8th School Squadron A. C., Building 2-325, Chanute Field, Rantoul, Ill., 22 yrs., would like to correspond with boys and girls whose hobbies are outdoor sports, writing letters and stamp collecting . . . Bill E. Galloway, 1114 Bandera Rd., San Antonio, Tex., 20 yrs., wants to communicate with girls about 18 yrs. in foreign countries; he was born in Mexico and can write Spanish . . .

A CITY ON IO

By HENRY GADE

An imaginary journey to the city of Crystallis on Io, one of Jupiter's moons. Our back cover illustrates Frank R. Paul's conception of that city, done in vivid watercolor

YOU might think it would be an easy job to be a jewel-trader on a world where whole cities were built of jewels, but then, you never tried to trade off a chunk of iron pyrites for a twelve-pound ruby with the average Ionian. Y'see, the Ionian is a funny critter.

Let me tell you about my own experiences, back in the early part of the century, just after the first Earth ship landed on Io and found out it was inhabited. That first visit started a jewel-rush that beat any legendary Klondike stampede all hollow. And I was about the stampedingest of 'em all—with riches in sight for the taking!

I'd just got back from Pluto with a load of scrap beryllium, salvaged from the ancient dead cities on the surface. It netted me a neat forty-thousand, and the day after I got the check, the news came from Io. I sank every penny into a one-man space cruiser and rocketed into the void. I guess I burned out every tube in the ship before I landed on Io, but I got there first—and first meant wealth beyond calculation, if the story was true.

Well, to shorten the story, it was true. The Ionians built their whole cities out of jewels!

Now don't get the idea that these cities were solid diamonds and emeralds and rubies—nothing like that. They were decorated with 'em, yes, and there were thousands of perfect stones to be had—but the majority of the city was constructed of huge crystals, precipitated or cast in some strange manner by the Ionians out of the huge deposits of silicon that abound on the planet. These crystal blocks are darned pretty, and they make a city of dreams and captured rainbows come true, but they are just so much glass and beer-bottles as far as I'm concerned.

I landed on a rugged terrain, and after a look-around, I cursed the report of treasure on Io. It was the damnedest, unlivable rock I ever camped on. Just a rocky, stony, cactus-covered hell-hole of a desert, all scrambled in with mountain ranges with no rhyme or reason to 'em. That planet had sure been through hell in its formative stages!

But I guess I was lucky at that, because I landed near a huge crystal dome that turned out to be the crimson-ruby skylight of an Ionian city!

Believe me, I got a thrill when I stood on that solid-cast red crystal roof and peered down through it at the gleaming city beneath! It was the most beautiful sight I'd ever seen. The light of the distant sun, combined with the yellow light from Jupiter, and the red glare from the famous Red Spot, which was directly overhead, made that city of crystals sparkle and gleam like a fairyland.

I could see giant crystal pillars, many-sided, with multi-faceted capitals atop them, supporting the roof on which I stood. Each of these colonnades seemed big enough to be an Earth sky-scraper, and in a little while I found out this was literally true. The Ionians live in them. It was hard to see the openings in them because of the sparkle. And what use are windows in a crystal building?

Several hundred feet below was the city-floor, and there were the people! They're a furry people, black and white, with red heads and faces. They look like animated teddy-bears. And ugly!

They waddled around on those solid glass floors like something out of a toy department. But I found out in a minute that they weren't toys, because all at once a half-dozen grabbed me from behind, and off they hustled me to the city.

I didn't offer any resistance, because I wanted to appear friendly, and I figured that if I wanted to trade with them later, I'd better be good.

That city was completely air-conditioned! Io is a cold world, and a man has to wear a space suit to live on it. But down below I was able to take off the suit. And then I found out the Ionians were friendly.

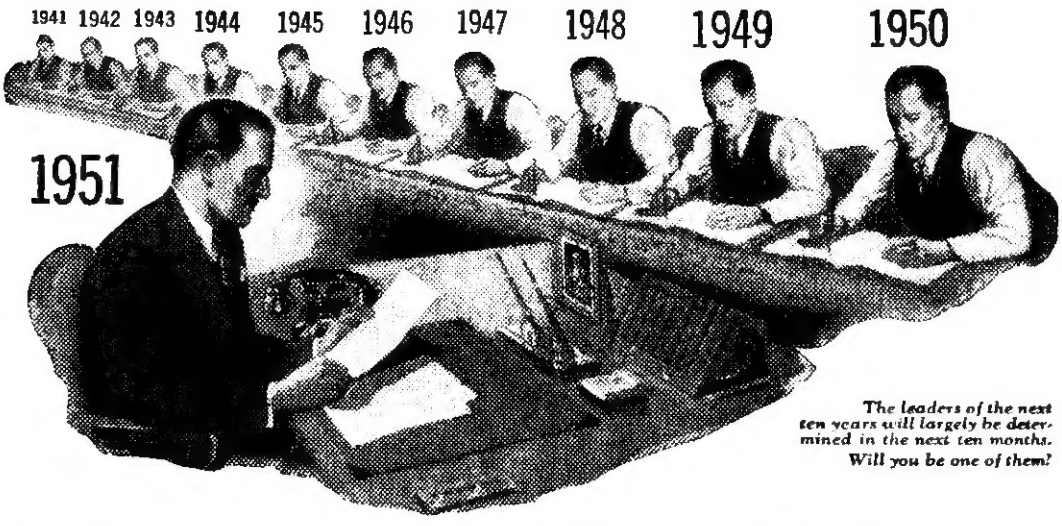
So, after a tour of that city, which was vaster than I had imagined, extending for miles beneath that ruby-red roof, I got around to business. I saw a peach of a diamond that must have weighed ten pounds if it weighed a carat, smack atop an ornamental statue at the corner of one of the pillar-buildings that hold up the roof.

I indicated that I wanted it, but the Ionians froze up right there. So I brought out my stock in trade. Iron pyrites, lead pencils, lumps of wax, and almost anything that *wasn't* crystal. And they went for it. But businessmen! Wow!

They haggled around until I was dizzy, and finally, I don't know how, I found myself up on the roof again, beside my ship, all my stuff traded, and in my hands, the diamond!

Except when I got to Earth, the jeweler told me it was nothing but a huge zircon!

Diamonds on Io—bah!



The leaders of the next ten years will largely be determined in the next ten months. Will you be one of them?

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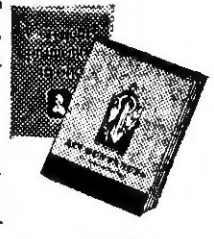

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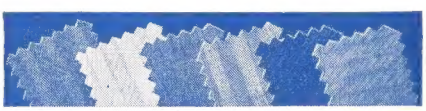

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City_____ State_____ W4106A

CRYSTALLIS, GLASS CITY OF IO

An entire city built of gleaming, jewel-like crystals. This is what a visitor will find in the weirdly beautiful Crystallis, the capital city of Io, satellite of Jupiter.

See page 145 for complete story.